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Marxism Today

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Marxism Today

Vol. 2 No. 6

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The Liberals

W. Wainwright

RECENT advances in the Liberal vote in Parliamentary and local government elections have been the subject of much discussion in the press, rejoicing by the Liberals and speculation concerning the possibility of a Liberal "revival". What is it that is being revived?

Since 1955, Tory candidates have lost 300,000 votes in by-elections. Labour has lost 70,000, but the Liberals in the thirteen by-elections they have fought have gained 60,000 votes. In the recent L.C.C. elections, the Liberals received 57,000 votes for thirty-one candidates as against 27,000 for thirty-six in 1955—nearly 2,000 per candidate compared with less than 1,000 before. At Torrington, the Liberals gained their first by-election victory for twenty-nine years, Mr. Mark Bonham Carter scraping home by a majority of 200.

The last Liberal Government was in 1910. The Liberal Party was supposed to have received its death blow in the 1918 General Election. Frank Owen, for example, wrote in his biography of Lloyd George that "the 1918 General Election . . . sounded the death rattle of the Liberal Party." The widespread newspaper publicity for these results is therefore not surprising.

The persistence of the Liberal vote through all these years shows that there are very many small business people, shopkeepers, farmers, middle class and professional people, who have voted Liberal because they regard the Tory Party as the out-and-out defender of big capitalist business. In the present situation of developing Tory capitalist offensive, more of these people are turning to the Liberals, as shown by the growth in their vote. And they do so because of the utter failure of the Labour Party to demonstrate that the only salvation for all these small business and middle class people lies with the Socialist alternative.

It would not be the first time, however, that the newspapers deliberately exaggerated the importance of the Liberals. The reason for this on a previous occasion was noted by Sir H. Slessor in his *History of the Liberal Party.*

> "The newspapers," he observed, "having no real fear of Liberalism (in the 1930s) hoped to embarrass Labour by causing disharmony as to ends and method by popularising the rival schemes of other progressives (which) gave to the Liberals an unreal importance."

How progressive the Liberals are, we shall presently see; but the comment is an apt one in the sense that the Tories would undoubtedly wish to divert the voters they are losing away from the Labour movement. If the Liberal Party can be refurbished to play some part in preventing a big swing to Labour, the Tories, in this situation, would not be averse to giving the Liberals considerable publicity.

Apart from this, however, the persistence of the Liberal vote, its increase, and the by-election victory are facts helping to disprove the theory of the "two-party system" so sedulously propagated by the leaders of the two big Parliamentary parties.

Here is an example of a party whose representation in the Commons had been brought down to six, which appeared to offer no hope of becoming an alternative Government and yet continued to receive support and in the present situation increases its support. This, surely, disposes of one argument of the propagandists of the two-party system, that the electorate will only support candidates belonging to parties with a reasonable prospect of forming a Government.

In point of fact, the virtual monopoly of Parliament by the two big parties sends some at least of the electorate seeking an alternative, particularly at times of economic and political crisis.

The "Two-Party System"

We have never accepted the validity of the theory of the "two-party system". In his book *The British Political System,* John Gollan discusses this question at some length. He says:

> "More nonsense is written about the British 'two-party' system than about any other element in political life with the exception of the monarchy. An editorial in the *Observer* in May, 1948, said that it had 'its roots in human nature', whatever that means. Sir Ernest Barker in his essay[1] on 'Reflections on the Party System' writes that after all, 'life is largely a matter of choice between two alternatives', so why should there not also be 'two rival views of politics'?
>
> "The fact is, of course, that in Britain there are not two political parties, there are four. But such is the British electoral system and the political consequences that follow it that one of them, the Communist Party, is excluded from Parliamentary representation, and the Liberal Party is virtually excluded."

[1] *The British Party System,* Hansard Society.

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Gollan then makes the point that the propagandists of the "two-party system" are not talking about parties, they are talking about the representation of parties in Parliament; and he shows that throughout the inter-war years "a three-party system plus independents" operated in Parliament. Nor have the Liberals accepted the view of a settled two-party system, but have continued to fight at each General Election and whenever the opportunity offered itself at by-elections.

The number of Liberal M.P.s returned at General Elections in the inter-war and post-war years is as follows:

1924 ..	40	1945 ..	12
1929 ..	59	1950 ..	9
1931 ..	33	1951 ..	6
1935 ..	17	1955 ..	6

Although this series of results can hardly be said to be encouraging, the leaders of the Liberal Party have refused to give in and have now tasted at least a little of the reward that comes from persistence.

It is sometimes argued by the "two-party system" advocates, that the introduction of a third or fourth party into Parliament spells the end of stable Government and that the present arrangement produces single-party Governments based on stable majorities. Gollan examines this argument also, showing it to be a mere device to discourage the smaller parties from contesting and to spread the notion that there is something wrong in voting for their candidates.

In fact, however, between the wars there were four "abnormal" Governments which did not run true to the "normal" pattern laid down by the "two-party system" advocates. These "abnormalities" consisted of two coalition Governments and two minority Governments. The war years saw yet another "abnormal" Government, the coalition formed to organise the war effort. There were only three "normal" single-party majority Governments between the wars and since the war we have had a "normal" Government in 1945 formed by the big majority given to Labour, followed by the "frustrated" Labour Government with a majority of six, the 1951 Tory majority of twenty-six representing a minority of the voters and in 1955 a Tory majority of just over sixty.

In other words, the present arrangement does not provide as often as its supporters say a Government based on a large and therefore stable majority. As Gollan observes:

> "The crisis of British imperialism has brought about corresponding strains and crises in the system of Parliamentary representation."

Rochdale and Torrington

At Rochdale and Torrington, the all-pervading issues were the H-bomb and disarmament, the Rent Act, and various aspects of the growing slump. On these questions, the Liberal candidates easily outdistanced the representatives of the Labour and Tory Parties in the use of ambiguous words and by their skill in conveying impressions of being against the H-bomb, or against the Rent Act, and so on. Mr. Bonham Carter, for example, issued a leaflet which called for a complete ban on the hydrogen bomb. He later admitted that this was a mistake and that he considered that the West must keep the bomb but Britain should stop making or testing it. Mr. Kennedy in Rochdale took a similar line, arguing that Britain should not make H-bombs but that we should depend on the American possession of the bomb; and although he called for a stop to the tests and explained the dangers to health they represented, he failed to call for a stop to American tests.

In a letter to *The Times* (after the election was over) Mr. Kennedy even went so far as to say "it is perfectly futile merely to campaign against hydrogen bomb 'tests' "—a somewhat belated and drastic shift from his constant claim, during the by-election, that the Liberals called for a stop to H-bomb tests. A typical report of one of his speeches (given in the *Rochdale Observer* on 8.2.58) reads as follows:

> "Mr. Kennedy has made no apology for stressing again and again that the greatest saving in Government expenditure could be made in relation to cuts in defence, particularly with regard to the manufacture and testing of H-bombs, which he says must stop."

He gave his audience, in this speech, figures from scientific sources to show the danger to life of continued H-bomb tests and ended by "imploring" the electors "to think seriously about this when they made up their minds on how to vote at the election". So that he was appealing for votes on a point which later he described as "futile"!

Other examples could be given of this type of confusing conduct, but it will be enough to refer to another issue and to Mr. Bonham Carter's denial—after his election—that Liberals opposed the Rent Act. He wrote (in the *Economist*, 5.4.58):

> "You suggest that Liberals oppose the Rent Act. As we suggested eight years ago that such an Act was necessary, this seems rather hard. As we voted for it in the House of Commons, it would seem inaccurate."

But the real question is whether Mr. Bonham Carter made this equally clear during the by-election!

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In addition to these issues, there were in Rochdale and in Torrington particular local questions causing acute concern to the people.

In Rochdale, the livelihood of a very large proportion of the population depends directly and indirectly on the health of the cotton industry. So bad is the effect of the Tory Government's policy, that the cotton employers' trade organisation called on the electorate to withdraw support from the Tory candidate. The employers' organisation played an active part in the election campaign. When the result was announced, the defeated Tory bitterly attacked the cotton employers' association, speaking of having been stabbed in the back by "the fourth candidate". On television the rejected Tory admitted that

> "recently the Government had had to take up several unpopular measures and as a consequence many Rochdale Conservatives had used their votes against him as a protest."

Far from denying this, the Rochdale and District Cotton Employers' Association

> "hoped that the Conservative Government will now realise the strong feeling in the Lancashire textile industry and will be moved to correct the injustice of the present position."

In fact, right from the start of the campaign, the employers' association "made no secret of their opposition to the Government" (*Rochdale Observer*).

In Torrington, a farming area, a similar situation developed. Here, the Government introduced two measures while the by-election campaign was in full spate, one of which held the threat of increased farming rents, the other of cutting state financial aid for milk and eggs, provoking local organisations of the National Farmers' Union to make public their opposition to the Tory Government and undoubtedly influencing the vote.

The result of these elections, as the *Daily Herald* remarked, "gives Labour nothing to crow about". For Labour failed to seize a glorious opportunity of rallying not only its own supporters but all those turning away in disgust from the Tories; and although the Labour man gained the day in Rochdale, his vote was 2 per cent less than in 1955, while in Torrington Labour's share of the vote went down.

Liberal Supporters

In both places, however, it is possible to conclude that groups of employers or farmers, small business and middle class people, turned away from the Tories to the Liberals, and in doing so influenced the outcome, in view of the absence of a clear, fighting Socialist alternative from Labour.

This is a situation capable of presenting considerable danger to Labour's prospects at the General Election. One hundred and seventy Liberal candidates have been adopted, according to reports, and if Labour continues to permit the Liberals to represent themselves as an alternative to the Tories, the opportunity of securing a big majority may be wrecked.

Whereas in many respects Labour's policy seems to many voters to be a modified version of Tory policy, the main aim of the Liberals at this time is to present themselves as being totally different from the Tory Party, because they read the electoral prospects as favouring candidates who appear to be "different", bringing into the election a challenge to the ruling party.

This is why the Liberals so swiftly and emphatically rejected the proposal of an anti-Socialist alliance with the Tories. Whether this was a serious offer or not, its rejection provided the Liberals with a useful opportunity to make a forceful public demonstration of their separateness from the Tory Party. Mr. Joseph Grimond, the Liberal leader, referring to the damage which an alliance with the Tories would do his party's cause, said: "One thing is certain today—the kiss of Toryism is death."

For similar reasons, the Liberals have rejected demands for a comprehensive and detailed statement of policy, as this would inevitably demonstrate the basic identity of their aims with those of the Tories. The *Daily Telegraph's* leader, describing Mr. Bonham Carter's election address as "barely distinguishable from government policy, either in its content or in the order of its priorities" (26.3.58), is a warning of dangers of which the Liberals are only too well aware. Revelling in ambiguity, for the time being at least, they prefer to play on the electorate's disgust with the results of Tory Government and Labour's failure to do anything serious about it.

The more the conduct of the Liberals is studied, the more can we appreciate the justice of Lenin's remark in 1914, that:

> "The Liberals are hypocritical everywhere but it is doubtful whether their hypocrisy goes to such lengths and to such refinement as in England."

To gain a clearer understanding of the meaning of such aspects of Liberal policy as are provided for us in their speeches and publications, it is necessary to take a look at Liberal business connections. Political parties reflect the interests of classes, and if we can discover who and what the Liberal Party is based on, and whose interests it represents, we can weigh more accurately its intentions.

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We can begin with a small, but highly important group connected with the leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Joseph Grimond, as follows:

Leader of Liberal Party
Mr. Joseph Grimond
|
married to
sister—Laura Miranda—daughter of Lady Violet
of and Sir Maurice Bonham Carter
|
Mr. Mark Bonham Carter, M.P. |
director of
|
Nuclear—makers of—Blackburn & General Aircraft
Bomber
NA-39

A word or two about the NA-39, to bring out the peculiarities of the situation shown in our little chart. This is a new bomber, specially designed for the Navy. Orders for quantities have not yet been placed. Much publicity has been organised to boost its effectiveness. Lord Mountbatten, at present First Sea Lord, and tipped as future chief of all three services, presided in March at the company's works when a new wind tunnel for testing the NA-39 was brought into use. Press releases inform the public that the U.S. is helping in development costs and that the U.S. is interested as a possible customer in the bomber.

So here, on the one hand, we have Mr. Bonham Carter, supported by his brother-in-law Mr. Grimond and by his mother Lady Violet, soliciting votes from the electorate in Torrington for a programme which includes the promise of arms reductions and opposition to nuclear weapon production by this country; while on the other hand, Sir Maurice Bonham Carter, father, father-in-law and husband respectively of the aforementioned trio, is supporting the activities of his company which is soliciting orders for its new nuclear bomber.

The Liberal Lords

"Liberals have no class axe to grind."
(*Rochdale Observer*)

LORD AIREDALE
- Ford Motor Co., Ltd.
- John Dickinson & Co., Ltd.
- London Assurance.

EARL AMHERST
LORD AMULREE
EARL OF ARRAN
LORD BEVERIDGE
LORD CARNOCK
LORD CATTO
- Yule Catto & Co., Ltd. (bankers).

VISCOUNT CLIFDEN
LORD COLWYN
LORD DE RAMSEY
VISCOUNT ELIBANK
VISCOUNT ESHER
EARL OF GAINSBOROUGH
LORD GLENCONNER
- C. Tennant Sons & Co., Ltd.
- Forestal Land Timber & Railways Co., Ltd.
- Hambros Bank Ltd.
- Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd.
- National Mortgage & Agency Co. of New Zealand, Ltd.
- Northern Assurance Co., Ltd.
- Palestine Potash, Ltd.
- Power Investment Corpn., Ltd.
- Silvermines Lead & Zinc Co., Ltd.
- Tennant and Budd, Ltd.
- Tennant's Estates (1928) Ltd.
- Tharsis Sulphur & Copper Co., Ltd.

LORD GRANTCHESTER
- London & Manchester Assurance Co., Ltd.
- County Fire Office, Ltd.

LORD HARMSWORTH
LORD HENLEY
LORD LAYTON
- Daily News Ltd.
- Economist Newspapers Ltd.
- National Mutual Life Assurance Society.
- Newsprint Supply Co.

LORD MARCHAMLEY
LORD MESTON
LORD METHUEN
LORD MOTTISTONE
LORD MOYNIHAN
- Durham Sykes R. B. Priest & Co.
- Fixed Properties (S.A.), Ltd.
- Industrial & Commercial Holdings Group, Ltd.
- Leeds Safe Deposit Co., Ltd.
- South African Motor Assemblers & Distributors, Ltd., (Lond. Cttee.).

LORD NORTHBOURNE
LORD NUNBURNHOLME
LORD PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE
LORD REA
- Rea Bros., Ltd. (merchant bankers).
- Burntisland Shipbuilding Co., Ltd.
- Cumberland Development Council.
- R. & J. H. Rea, Ltd.
- Rea Bros. (Insurance), Ltd.
- Rea, Ltd.
- Scottish and Mercantile Investment Co., Ltd.

LORD ROWALLAN
- Century Insurance Co., Ltd.
- Century Insurance Trust Ltd.
- Dundonald Investment Co.
- Friends Provident & Century Life Office.
- Lawas (Sarawak (Estates) Ltd.
- National Bank of Scotland.

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DUKE OF ST ALBANS	
VISCOUNT SAMUEL	
LORD SAYE AND SELE	
LORD SHERWOOD	
LORD SINHA	
LORD STAMP	
LORD STRABOLGI	
LORD SWAYTHLING	
LORD TERRINGTON	Law Fire Insurance Society Ltd.
VISCOUNT THURSO	Scottish Equitable Life Assurance Society.
LORD TREFGARNE	
LORD WHITBURGH	
VISCOUNT WIMBORNE	Harris & Dixon Ltd. London Assurance.
LORD WINDLESHAM	

Now consider the list of Liberal peers given above and the companies of which they are chairmen or directors. Note first that there are more Liberal peers, who do not have to be elected, than there are M.P.s who have to be elected. Note next that their business connections cover an extremely important range of industrial and financial activities.

If we now go through the list of directors of all these firms and draw up another list consisting of all the other firms of which they are directors, we obtain the following result:

The Liberal Party is connected, through its members in the House of Lords, with five concerns connected with the U.S.A.; with about thirty insurance and forty banking concerns including the Bank of England, Barclays, Lloyds and others of the "big five", as well as all the important banks in Scotland; with about thirty property companies operating in this country and many operating overseas; with several oil firms such as Shell and B.P.; with transport and shipping concerns including William Cory, shipbuilding firms such as John Brown, steel producers such as Colville's, Clyde Alloy, Lanarkshire Steel, Steel Company of Scotland, Steel Company of Wales; with chemical firms such as I.C.I. and International Nickel; engineering concerns such as Vickers, Pressed Steel, Firth Brown, Sheepbridge; several air transport concerns, four motor manufacturers including Ford and Rolls-Royce; with monopoly concerns like the British Match Corporation; with newspapers and newsagencies such as the *Financial Times*, the *Economist*, *The Times*, Reuters, *Birmingham Post*, Aberdeen Journals, Kemsley Newspapers, *Newcastle Chronicle*, Northern Counties Conservative Newspapers Company, Northern Daily Telegraph Ltd., *Sheffield Telegraph*, *Sunday Graphic*, *Western Mail*, and a number of other newspapers; with investment and trade in colonial countries, commonwealth countries, North, South and Central America including the U.S.A., Asia and countries in Europe; with organisations of employers such as the British Employers' Confederation, the Federation of British Industries, the Chamber of Shipping, the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association

On the boards of these companies there are Tories: Tory businessmen and Tory peers. We find such well-known names as Mr. W. J. Keswick of "bank rate" fame; Viscount Chandos, Lord Coleraine, Viscount Hinchingbrooke, Viscount Bracken, Viscount Moore, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Viscount Weir and numerous others.

Industrial and Financial Basis

In other words, our analysis reveals that the Liberal Party, far from being different in its basis to the Tory Party, derives its outlook and its chief members from industrial and financial groups which are exactly the same as those supplying the mainsprings of Tory wealth, outlook and policy.

Once this class basis is established, and we can see how, despite verbal differences in the political arena, prominent Liberals and Tories work side by side to promote the interests of the same banking, industrial, investment or property concern, we can see the complete identity of class interests of the two parties. Within each party and between each party there will be groups and individuals who will compete with each other for markets, profits and position. But there will be general agreement at least at the top level on the main lines of policy to be operated by the Government on their behalf.

This explains why, when the various aspects of Liberal policy are examined, we find them, at bottom, no more and no less than Tory policy written in different words.

The final stage of our journey through Liberalism therefore takes us to its speeches and publications.

We begin with disarmament. The Liberal General Election Manifesto of 1951 declared:

> "We have begun a gigantic programme of rearmament, which will affect the living standards of all of us. . . . We fully support the rearmament programme."

Their General Election Manifesto of 1955 stated:

> "There is fortunately broad agreement in this country both about the aims of British foreign policy and the means by which they are to be realised. The search for a foreign policy which

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> shall be different from that of the Government of the day for the mere sake of opposition is futile and unpatriotic."

They also indicate support for the rearming of Germany which needed "strength" for negotiations with Russia.

On April 16th, 1947, Mr. Clement Davies, speaking for the Liberals in the House of Commons, supported the defence policy of the Government as laid down in the White Paper, including the proposal to go over to nuclear weapons. After this, his request that the Prime Minister should say what the Government thought about Mr. Stassen's proposals, or the request from Mr. Grimond that the Government should take the initiative in stopping tests, seems to be meaningless, except in so far as this could be used to put these members right with their constituency supporters.

Lest there should be any dubiety as to where the Liberals stand on the policy of preparations for nuclear war, the Liberal Party's official summary of the Lords debate states: "In general, Liberals welcomed the White Paper for its realistic approach" (*They Speak for Millions.*) Note that they *welcomed* a policy which the Government recognised to be incapable of giving protection to the civilian population in the event of nuclear war.

So that from 1951 onwards, the Liberal Party's official position has been in support of the Government's rearmament, its nuclear war preparations, and its anti-Soviet foreign policy. When these official pronouncements are considered together with the Liberal business connections, the value of Liberal pretensions to a desire for disarmament or the abolition of nuclear weapons can be truly assessed. But in the by-election campaigns, the Liberal spokesmen simply concealed the truth of the official position of their Party, giving the public the phrasemonger treatment of which Lloyd George was so outstanding an exponent.

The general line on the H-bomb, for public consumption, is given in various leaflets. For example, *The Penny Liberal* (No. 2, 1957) says:

> "Britain should not make its own H-bombs or other nuclear weapons. Britain should not build rocket bases for N.A.T.O., the U.S.A., or herself. . . . The Western Alliance should rely on missiles fired from submarines. . . . We want N.A.T.O. control of nuclear weapons."

What this gibberish means is that the Liberals do not consider that Britain should make the H-bomb but that it should make full use of the American stocks and manufacture, and that in some unspecified way, if nuclear rockets are fired by Britain offshore from submarines, this island will be safer from any nuclear counter-blow.

Next, consider the question of nationalisation. Obviously, with such powerful representatives of capitalist big business involved with the Liberal Party, not to mention the points of financial contact with the U.S.A., you would not expect them to favour nationalisation. Nor do they. In their publications, they consistently attack this, just as the Tories do.

Line on Trade Unions

To the trade unions, they have an utterly reactionary attitude. They call for a Royal Commission to limit trade union rights. Wage negotiations on a national scale, between all the workers in an industry and the employers, they oppose. What they call for are wage negotiations factory by factory—an obvious move, designed to divide the workers and thus weaken their struggle for improved wage standards. This policy, too, would set the trade union movement back many years, to a position from which it emerged only after prolonged fights by such organisations as the N.U.M. for the right to negotiate wages on a national instead of a district and area scale.

They offer a scheme of co-partnership, with shares given to the workers in a particular enterprise by the employers. What stands in the way, they ruefully tell us, is that the Government has not yet seen fit to accept the proposal that the value of these shares should be counted for tax purposes as costs of production, so that the employer would pay less in taxes in proportion to the value of the shares he handed out to his workers. A cunning move, this!—to try to get the country to pay the employers' share of taxation so that they can use the money to try to tame their workers by bribing them with a few crumbs from the profits. Something of this sort is widespread in West Germany—but that did not stop the steel workers from threatening a strike unless they received a pay rise recently!

The Liberal attitude to the Rent Act has already been mentioned, but it is returned to here to call attention to the long list of property concerns with which prominent Liberals are connected. It stands to reason that with such associations, it would not be possible for the Liberal Party to oppose a measure putting more money into the pockets of the landlords.

Finally, the Liberal attitude to democracy and full employment.

Note, to begin with, the hypocrisy of the Liberal claim to reform the electoral system, so that seats might be obtained in proportion to votes, while they do nothing to get the undemocratic House of Lords abolished. And how could

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they—when the real strength of the Liberal Party resides in that Place from which the peers cannot be budged by the wishes of the people (at least not for the present!)?

However, the general impression the Liberals seek to convey is that they are great democrats. In typically grandiose phrases, Mr. Grimond, for example, demands that "an efficient Parliament should be the watch-dog of individual liberty" (see his pamphlet *The New Liberalism*), and he asserts that individual freedom must be "not grudgingly given, not a negative absence of restraint, but (given) as a positive spur".

On the other hand, Mr. Ernst Bieri, in his pamphlet *On Liberalism*, published by the Liberal International, gives a completely different view of the official attitude (and since the pamphlet is obtainable from Liberal Party headquarters it presumably has its approval). Mr. Bieri says:

> "The danger of our century is not too little, but too much democracy. Democracy has degenerated into 'democratism'. An inordinate estimation of the purely mechanical devices of the articulation of the popular will—the suffrage, majority decision, parliamentary procedures—is spreading far and wide."

Under which druidical stones do these troglodytes live? And yet how closely this idea corresponds to Lord Hailsham's recent utterances against the growing custom of ordinary people to expect their elected representatives to carry out their wishes, and to conduct ballots, petitions, polls of opinion and such like to bring the pressure of their views to bear upon reluctant Governments!

"The Road to Ruin"

Lest it be said that Mr. Bieri does not speak for the "New Liberalism", we must cite the views of the reigning President of the Liberal Party, the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Micklem. In his presidential address to the Liberal Party Assembly last September, he said:

> "Our democracy is breaking down; we are on the road to ruin because governments are afraid to govern; we are too near mob rule. Better a Liberal Government than some form of dictatorship to which mob rule leads." (Liberal Party pamphlet *Honest Politics for a New World.*)

It is to be doubted whether this gentleman was let loose during the Torrington by-election; but if so, he succeeded in keeping such thoughts to himself. But these views, having the force of policy, express more exactly the Liberal attitude to "individual liberty" and democracy, than the ambiguous battle cries of Mr. Grimond.

The Rev. Nathaniel Micklem's presidential address also informs us that

"Liberals believe whole-heartedly in full employment, in full productive employment, but not at all in the spurious full employment or, as they sometimes call it, the over-full employment that we have today. There is no full productive employment when unnecessary jobs are being made for men in Covent Garden or elsewhere. . . . Free trade, or for that matter automation, involves that where necessity or opportunity require it men must change their jobs. That involves temporary unemployment. . . ." A man rendered unemployed for such reasons "can be given the reasonable hope that having lost one job he may find a better . . ." ". . . the pound must be made stable and convertible. . . . I am not saying that this can be done . . . without a radical change in policy and without temporary dislocation of our present industrial system which would involve some temporary unemployment. . . . I do not suggest it will at once be a policy popular with the electorate."

Compare this with the Liberal Party General Election Manifesto 1950:

> "The Liberal Party believes passionately in full employment in a free society, and in maintaining the social services."

All this, of course, including the somersault. can be matched, practically word for word, in countless statements by the Tory Party, the Federation of British Industries and similar organisations; but the fact that the Liberal Party's views on these questions coincide so exactly with those of the Tory Party and of employers' organisations should not surprise us.

Nevertheless much needs to be done, in and by the Labour movement, to recall who the Liberals are and what they really stand for. Once the class analysis is made, anyone can see that the "New Liberalism" is merely a section of Toryism. But because for many years the Liberals have been so little of a Parliamentary threat, taking the country as a whole, they have largely been ignored.

This present analysis shows that this would not be wise at this time, and that there could be a real threat developing from what is, after all, a party with an extremely reactionary programme.

Yet thousands of people have been attracted to it in this new Liberal offensive—people looking sincerely for a change, for an alternative policy.

All this emphasises once again the great need for a drastic change in Labour's electoral tactics and in particular in its policy, so that it can stand out as the undisputed alternative to Toryism.

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The House of Lords

Hymie Fagan

IN 1947 the Conservative Political Centre published a pamphlet which posed the following question:

> "Is the House of Lords as at present constituted just the right sort of body to exercise and to be allowed to exercise such a discretionary power against a Socialist as well as a Conservative Government, and, even more important, might not its consciousness that it is not such a body restrain it from taking action in the national interest which in fact a differently constituted body would take with assurance?"

It was an important question, which contained a vital clue to the way the ruling class were approaching the reform of the House of Lords. It was again referred to in the 1950 General Election manifesto of the Conservative Party in which two propositions were made:

(*a*) The present right to attend and vote based solely on heredity should not by itself constitute a qualification for admission to a reformed House of Lords.

(*b*) A reformed House of Lords should have powers appropriate to its constitution but not exceeding those conferred by the Act of 1911.

The considered Tory reply both to the question posed in 1947 and the two propositions made in 1950 is contained in the Life Peerages Bill.

In the words of Mr. Butler, who introduced the measure, it is a

> "short measure to enable life peers, who may include women, to be created with the right to sit and vote in the House of Lords."

The fact that the Tory Government has sought to introduce such a contentious piece of legislation during the few remaining months of its life arouses speculation.

Why is the ruling class not satisfied with the House of Lords as at present constituted? It is very well known that the House of Lords is nothing but a sub-committee of the Tories, with a vast Tory majority. A Tory Government has never had to face difficulties with the House of Lords. Any legislation proposed by a Tory Government is guaranteed to pass through the House of Lords with a minimum of delay. History has proved this. It has also shown that the only Governments which have ever had to face frustration and downright opposition to legislation have been Liberal and Labour Governments attempting to introduce progressive legislation. Why then raise the issue at all? On the face of it there appears to be no urgency for the Tories. On the contrary, if they are beaten at the next General Election—and everything goes to show that they will be beaten—they will still control the House of Lords.

Furthermore the question of the reform of the House of Lords has been before the country for over a generation, even longer. Why then bring the matter to a head at this particular time?

The answer is that this Bill is an integral part of the strategy which the Tories have been carrying out since they took office in 1951.

During this period, the Tories have raised every possible obstacle, and made every possible difficulty for any future Labour Government which might follow. The future path for any progressive government is strewn with pitfalls and booby traps. So much has been amended, so much repealed, so much of the fabric of the Welfare State torn down and mutilated, that it might well take a long time for a Labour Government to restore things to what they were when Labour was defeated in 1951.

Time and again, as with the 1954 and 1957 Rent Acts, the Tories have even taken grave electoral risks in order to carry through their policy.

The Tories' Aim

In short the whole of the strategy has been to prepare for all future eventualities; to have so buttressed the capitalist state, that the ruling class will be able to meet any threat or challenge which might come from a government even led by Mr. Gaitskell. The Tories—the ruling class, that is—have never really recovered from the shattering fright they received in the 1945 General Election.

Seen in this light, the House of Lords comes into the picture. It is one of the strongest of fortresses of the ruling class, able to withstand a long siege. It is indeed the House of Obstruction, as John Gollan so aptly named it in his book *The British Political System*.

But if the House of Lords is to remain the great insurance cover for the ruling class that it is, it must have its mailed fist covered. The harridan is centuries old and bears all the marks of feudal absolutism in this age of the Common Man, when the world is advancing towards Communism. In a world where the ruling class

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can no longer rely on the old balance of power, when right-wing social democracy is daily being exposed, as in France and Italy where it has been absolutely discredited, how can a feudal Second Chamber which completely negates even the limited democracy of a capitalist state be accepted by an advancing working class?

In short, to refer to the question quoted at the beginning of this article, will "the House of Lords *as at present constituted*" be able to carry out its historic function of keeping back progress and *will it be allowed to do so*? More than that. Is it not possible that, faced with a really strong and united working class, the House of Lords as at present constituted might feel itself too weak, unrepresentative and powerless to carry out its function of hindering progressive legislation and the advance of socialism? As the Tories say, might not the House of Lords, conscious of the fact that it is not the right sort of body to deal with such an advance of the masses, refrain from "taking action in the national interest . . . which a differently constituted body would take with assurance"?

The House of Lords is not really going to be reformed. A new velvet glove is to be fitted. One which will hide the harsh outlines of the mailed fist of ruling class dictatorship. Camouflaged in this way, the House of Lords will face its tasks with assurance and aplomb—or so the Tories believe. It is an old trick. "The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob." Even the blind old Isaac almost saw through it.

Do the Tories really think that they can carry through such a deception when the record of the House of Lords over the last 100 years is there for all to see?

It is a history of black reaction. Before the bourgeoisie could establish itself in the nineteenth century, it had to conduct a bitter fight before it could overcome the House of Lords in the great struggle over the 1832 Reform Bill. The bourgeoisie had to consolidate its power step by step in the teeth of the resistance of the House of Lords which obstructed and rejected every form of legislation which had the faintest vestige of liberalism.

> "It bitterly opposed the Irish Home Rule proposals of the Liberals. Land was its special interest. While an Act facilitating eviction was passed in 1850, it rejected six times between 1842 and 1880 Bills to provide compensation to tenants for improvements . . . they largely nullified the Employers' Liability Bill of 1892 by insisting on the principle of contracting out." (Gollan, p. 65.)

Indeed it became so bad that some of the more thoughtful and farsighted Tories like the Marquess of Salisbury became uneasy, just as they are today, at this naked exhibition of black reaction and its effect on the advancing working class now busily engaged in building their political parties and their trade unions. Naturally the House of Lords did its utmost to stop this advance. The Law Lords' reactionary judgments in the case of Taff Vale and later in the Osborne case are now part of the working class movement; so is the way the working class fought and broke through the barriers erected by the House of Lords by their judgments.

In the years 1909/1910 the Liberals, especially Lloyd George, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, joined issue with the House of Lords over his budget, which contained some proposals for a small tax on land. The Lords removed these proposals.

The Parliament Act

The fight resulted in the passing of the Parliament Act, 1911, which removed the power of the Lords over Money Bills, or financial legislation, and restricted their hitherto almost absolute veto to a veto on legislation other than Money Bills, to a period of two years. Everything else remained unchanged. Its reactionary powers remained untouched, despite all the burning demagogy poured out by Lloyd George. Yet he knew the truth, as do all who study the record of the House of Lords:

> "No one who examines the legislative record of the House of Lords," write Greaves in his book *The British Constitution*, "however predisposed he may be towards it, can see in it anything but a consistent fight for the interests of the wealthy."

In 1949 the Labour Government brought in a further Parliamentary Act which limited the power of veto to one year. Like Lloyd George before them, they did not seize this opportunity finally to dispose of the House of Lords with its malevolent power to thwart democracy:

> "There remains the threat to democratic government, government in an Assembly when members of the opposition party can be numbered on the fingers of one hand, while in the background lies the menace of the legion of the Conservative peers who might once again emerge from the backwoods to defeat a progressive government."

says the introduction to the 1939 edition of Dicey's book on Constitutional Law.

And this is the reason why, to the working class movement, the existence or the reform of the House of Lords is a matter of such grave concern. Indeed with the rate of the advance of the working class movement it has become a

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matter of urgency. It would be no exaggeration to say that the House of Lords, even padded out with an extra number of Labour life peers, could, if it retained its present powers, hold up much of the programme of the *British Road to Socialism*, or any other progressive legislation.

The House of Lords could not fail to oppose such legislation. Its very nature makes it imperative for it to do so, for this non-elected hereditary Chamber, with its permanent Tory majority, represents the most powerful sections of finance capital as well as landowners and landlords.

At present the House of Lords consists of 868 members. Of these 807 are hereditary peers, two archbishops, twenty-four bishops, sixteen Scottish peers, five Irish, nine Lords of Appeal (the Law Lords) and five retired Lords of Appeal.

Although a number of these are appointed, traditionally the House of Lords is supposed to consist of ancient hereditary ruling families. Today however, such ancient family representatives are in a minority. Only 142 peers hold titles created before or during the eighteenth century; 261 hold titles created in the nineteenth century, and 404 hold titles created in the twentieth century. Thus more than half of the peerages represented in the present House of Lords were created in the twentieth century.

Property the Basis

Property is the basis of the House of Lords. It is not too easy to estimate the landholdings of their lordships, for they are somewhat shy and retiring in making public the extent of their vast possessions, but in 1922 it was estimated that 227 titled landowners held between them 7,362,000 acres.

Since then most have gone to cover, for when an attempt was made at estimating the extent of their land ownership, it was found that the possessions of only 76 could be traced. These held between them 1,601,200 acres. The remaining 453 landowners had succeeded in covering their traces.

It is not so difficult to trace the interests of finance capital represented in the House of Lords. It is estimated that 280 titled company directors in the House of Lords hold between them 1,269 directorships. They represent the most powerful sections of finance capital. I.C.I. Leverhulme's, International Nickel, Ford's, British Motor Corporation, Vickers, Tate and Lyle's, Vesty's. Shipbuilding, steel, banking and insurance are also very fully and ably represented.

It is therefore not surprising to learn that there are 484 Conservative peers in the House of Lords, taking the Tory Whip. That is 55 per cent of the total membership. There are a further 547 peers who turn up on average ten times a year and support all Conservative motions. These form the strategic reserve and their attendance can always be relied upon in any emergency. Thus although the normal attendance at the House of Lords is approximately thirty-five, nearly 300 have been known to turn up whenever any of their vested interests have been threatened by legislation.

Labour Lords

Of all the members of the House of Lords, only 5 per cent take the Labour Whip. On such a basis any form of democratic discussion or any form of opposition is a farce. This is one of the main reasons why the Tories want to provide a thin screen of Opposition Labour lords who, they hope, will be safe enough to act in concert with the Tory lords, whenever it is essential for the safeguarding of capitalist interests or the interests of the capitalist state.

Just as a Lord Salisbury in the nineteenth century sought to reform the House of Lords in a manner which would make its reactionary powers less obvious, and thereby lessen the growing demand for its total abolition, so today does the present Lord Salisbury propose an additional figleaf. His is the dominating voice in the Tory Party demanding present reform. So confident are they, that they make no attempt to hide the reason. Speaking in the House of Lords on the Life Peerages Bill, Lord Home said a few months ago:

> "We on this side of the House, believing as we do that the hereditary peerage has a part to play in the Upper House of Parliament, have willingly modified the hereditary principle by the introduction of life peers so as to enable the socialist point of view to be put more effectively . . . we have been willing to make that compromise . . . and if the noble lords opposite . . . will show a similar spirit of compromise . . . we can arrive at the kind of scheme which is outlined by Lord Salisbury."

During the debate in the House of Commons (12/2/58) Lady Tweedsmuir, a Tory M.P., developed the idea behind the reform a trifle more unguardedly:

> "I believe that the country recognises the need for a Second Chamber. The main reason is that we in Britain need, perhaps more than any other country, the check and balance to our unwritten constitution. We have no other safeguards against an extreme majority passing an Enabling Act to push through any legislation it likes at a speed so swift that the public has no idea of what is being done in its name. Because most of us here have only too vividly in mind the lessons of history in arbitrary power, surely

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we can agree to curb ourselves while yet we may."

If one considers that the House of Lords put down over 500 amendments to the Transport Bill sent in by a Labour-controlled House of Commons, yet hardly touched or amended the 1957 Rent Act, the sort of "arbitrary power" she wants to be "curbed" and the sort of power she wants to stay "uncurbed" can be judged.

But what of the Labour opposition in all this? What of the Labour leadership? Do they understand the danger lying dormant in the proposed "reform"? The answer is an emphatic Yes.

Mr. Gaitskell moved the following amendment to the Government's Bill during its second reading:

> "This House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which leaves the House of Lords overwhelmingly hereditary in character and with unimpaired powers to frustrate and obstruct the will of the elected representatives of the people."

During his speech in support of this amendment Mr. Gaitskell made it quite clear that he understood perfectly the reasons why the Tories wanted, under the guise of reform, to strengthen the status of the House of Lords, to streamline it, to make it more acceptable to the masses, so that it could carry out its undemocratic and anti-socialist activities unhindered by a growing demand for its abolition.

The Lords can Obstruct

In his speech Mr. Gaitskell drew attention to the fact that the Labour Party had had a good deal of trouble with the House of Lords over a long period of time, and that he knew that the main motive behind the proposed reform of the House of Lords was "to preserve the authority and enhance the prestige of the House of Lords".

He went on to say that the powers of the House of Lords, particularly its power to delay the passage of a Bill which a Labour or progressive Government might need to pass with great speed, was "considerable":

> "It may well be," continued Mr. Gaitskell, "that a future Labour Government may wish to pass rapidly a short Bill of great importance for which it had a complete mandate, through both Houses of Parliament, and this might then have to face obstruction of this kind. The amount of delay alone might be very dangerous, and if this were to happen towards the end of the Government's period of office, it would, in face, *prevent that Government from carrying that Bill at all.*"

In short, despite the reforms of the House of Lords in 1911 and in 1949, the House of Lords could still constitutionally defy a progressive Government, who with the full backing of the people, might wish to pass an important piece of socialist legislation. This was its main purpose, continued Mr. Gaitskell:

> "Government supporters have always believed in a House of Lords as a Tory machine to delay the passage of socialist legislation. The plain fact is that this power has never been used against a Tory Government. . . ."

Thus even the right wing of the Labour Party finds it hard to swallow the proposed reform of the House of Lords.

If that is the case, it is permitted to ask why did not the amendment put forward the classic Labour demand for the total abolition of the House of Lords? After all, there are many precedents. The 1934 Annual Conference of the Labour Party made some very strong criticisms of the House of Lords and made this proposal which was fully endorsed by the conference:

> "A Labour Government meeting with sabotage from the House of Lords would take immediate steps to overcome it; and it will, in any event, take steps during its term of office to pass legislation abolishing the House of Lords as a legislative Chamber. . . ."

Even Mr. J. R. Clynes, who introduced the report, was moved to say, "In our view the House of Lords is an institution which cannot well be reformed; it cannot be amended, it must be ended", and no one can accuse the late Mr. Clynes of having been affected even in the slightest degree with a left-wing point of view.

Why not Abolition?

The only conclusion which can be drawn from the strange absence of the demand for the abolition of the House of Lords is that the right wing of the Labour Party do not want it abolished now that they may shortly have the power so to do. The right wing is afraid of what a left-wing Labour majority in the House of Commons might do. Like the Tories they too feel the need for a Second Chamber which would delay and frustrate any attempt by the left wing to carry out the demands of the masses for real socialist legislation and for inroads to be made into the framework of the capitalist state. What better than to have a Second Chamber which could reject such proposed legislation, without later having to come back to the people asking for re-election.

It is more than obvious that this is the reason for the amendment carrying only the demand for a different type of reform, and not for total abolition.

There are however, some honourable exceptions, particularly Mr. Bowles, M.P., one of the few Labour M.P.s who argued the case for the

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total abolition of the House of Lords. During his speech he gave some facts and figures to answer those who say that one of the most important functions of the House of Lords as a Second Chamber is its power and ability to revise legislation, after the rush and hurly-burly of the House of Commons.

It should be explained that when the House of Commons has passed a Bill after the Third Reading, it goes to the House of Lords, and there, their lordships examine whether it is legally water-tight and carries out the intention of the Government, in a quiet, dignified and unhurried manner, or so it is said.

Using the Rent Act 1957 as an example of the ineptitude of the House of Lords as a Revising Chamber Mr. Bowles, M.P. said:

> "Take the case of the Rent Bill, last year. It is always under discussion nowadays. The House of Commons Standing Committee . . . sat for 75 hours. Then the House of Commons Report Stage lasted for 13 hours 43 minutes. That is a total of over 88 hours. When the Rent Bill went to the House of Lords for the purpose of revision, the Committee Stage there lasted 8 hours 34 minutes, instead of our 75 hours. Secondly the Report Stage, instead of our two days, lasted 2 hours 37 minutes; there was no proper revision. This is proved by the fact that there are repeatedly contradictory judgments from learned County Court judges on some of the matters that the Minister of Housing thought were of great importance and covered in the Bill . . . there was an appeal to the High Court. *In other words, I say quite seriously, that the House of Lords use of revisory powers are derisory.*"

If, therefore, the revising power of the House of Lords is as farcical as this, and it is very obvious to anybody who follows its day to day activities in the pages of Hansard, then there simply is no case at all for the continued existence of the House of Lords as a legislative chamber. All that is left is its dangerous powers of delay, frustration and opposition to any progressive legislation. This is its real remaining power.

> "The power in fact to postpone is a power to defeat the changes regarded as necessary by the party chosen for office by the electorate only, and at the period when it comes to assess the use made by the party of its authority. . . . It is better, therefore, to have directly single chamber government, and to throw the burden of control upon the electorate which chooses the Chamber."

wrote the late Harold Laski in his book *A Grammar of Politics*. And that is not the only danger. Much legislation is carried through by Statutory Rules and Orders. The House of Lords still retains the power to reject these, and it is likely that despite the two Parliamentary Acts, nothing can be done by the House of Commons to prevent it.

It should now be clear why the Tories have introduced the Life Peerages Bill at this late stage. They fear the future. They fear the pressure of the masses upon the next Labour Government, for the people will not be quite so patient and amenable as they were when Labour was last in power. The Tories and right-wing Labour fear a type of government as outlined in the *British Road to Socialism,* determined to utilise all the powers which are available to transform Parliament into a weapon of social change, just as the bourgeoisie took the feudal parliament and transformed it into a weapon to establish its own power.

Right Wing Policy

The right wing of the Labour Party are fully aware of the danger of this too. This is why they have dropped the demand for the total abolition of the House of Lords and tinker with the idea of reforms, or even converting the Privy Council into a Second Chamber.

There is also a growing belief that despite the apparent opposition to the present Bill by Mr. Gaitskell, at bottom there is a welcome to the idea of life peerages. The writing is appearing on the wall for many of the right wing, who defend capitalism more than they fight for socialism. Constituency parties no longer accept the dictation of Transport House as to who shall be chosen to represent their constituencies, as Mr. Woodrow Wyatt, a bosom friend of Mr. Gaitskell, has found to his cost. Constituency parties are beginning to reject such men as prospective candidates, and if this trend develops, there might be a threat to the right wing domination of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

What simpler, therefore, than to make such well known reactionaries as Wyatt etc. life peers? Not only would the right wing thereby be strengthened, but such men would be able to play their part in frustrating and rejecting socialist legislation. Any threat to capitalism would see them firmly united with the Tories. They could do this without fear of being thrown out by the angry workers at the elections. They would be there, established for life, as permanent agents of the ruling class in the ranks of the Labour movement.

The Life Peerages Bill represents a threat to the Labour movement. Not only because under the name of reform its powers and authority will be strengthened, but because the right wing of the Labour movement could establish itself as a real threat to any left-wing Labour Government.

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The Labour movement should see to it that once the measure is passed through both Houses of Parliament, as it has now been owing to the automatic Tory majorities in both Houses, then the Labour Party should refuse to nominate anyone in Labour's ranks.

In winding up his speech in the Commons, Mr. Bowles said this of the members of the House of Lords:

> "Whoever they are they cannot have any sense of responsibility, for they are not responsible to any electors. They are never called upon to justify their actions or their votes. . . . Whatever their brains, whatever their background and experience, they should have no control over this House. Whether they chose their fathers carefully or are the creatures of party leaders, whether for life or otherwise, they should not exist to say us nay. They should not exist at all. I have heard no valid argument for any Second Chamber in this country. We cannot tolerate a hybrid Parliament. We alone, subject to the electors, must be supreme."

His is the authentic voice of Labour and the movement would be greatly in error if it turned a deaf ear to this appeal.

Soviet Industrial Planning in Flux

Bob Davies

SOVIET industrial planning and administration were by and large well suited for the job they were designed to do—forcing through the first stages of industrialisation in a peasant country which was alone in a capitalist world.

In this article I discuss the extent to which the industrial planning system of what we might call the "period of primary industrialisation" is a suitable one for the next stage of Soviet economic advance. *It should be kept firmly in mind throughout that administrative arrangements of the kind we are discussing are secondary in importance to their wider social and economic context.* The Soviet planning system does not have an independent validity of its own; the rate of economic growth was made possible by the application of Marxist ideas by the Bolshevik party, in a form adapted to Russian national traditions, within the framework of a social order in which state ownership of means of production predominated. The industrial planning system was one of the administrative channels which enabled the dynamic of Soviet socialism to result in rapid industrialisation.

The main economic features of the industrialisation period were these. Investment was concentrated to an unprecedented degree on the expansion of fuel, metals, power, heavy machine-building and other producer goods. (Visitors to present-day Russia are always struck by the contrast which has resulted between the high technological level in, say, heavy engineering and the backwardness of the textiles and other consumer goods industries.) This policy of priority to heavy industry also meant that housing and agriculture were *relatively* neglected (pre-war attempts to make a substantial increase in the proportion of investment devoted to consumer goods could not be brought to fruition because of the rise of aggressive Nazism in Germany, which forced the Soviet government to undertake a rearmament drive). The new factories and their ancillaries, designed largely according to West-European prototypes, were manned by labour which poured into the towns from the countryside, and was rapidly educated and "boiled in the factory kettle", as the Russian saying goes. To feed this growing urban population, close control was kept by the state over agricultural supplies through the collective farm system.

The industrial planning structure which came into being during the first five-year plan was appropriate to these general economic conditions. It was characterised by great centralisation of planning powers, which made it possible to concentrate labour and materials on the key sectors of heavy industry and also enabled closer control of what happened at the point of production in a situation in which available managerial and planning personnel at factory level were often semi-literate and untrained.

From an administrative point of view, the driving force in economic expansion was the centralised production drive. On the basis of present performance, the planners set annual production targets at a level which meant that each factory had to exert itself to reach them.

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This production drive in existing plants was one side of planning; equally important was the transfer of labour, equipment and materials into the building of new plants in rough accordance with a five-year national programme, again under close central control.

The Central Plan

This system meant, broadly speaking, that production was controlled not through prices and the profit-motive but through production orders based on the central plan: a factory produced any particular item not so much because it paid it to do so as because it was necessary to the fulfilment of the plan. This was not, however, a moneyless economy. Wages were paid in money, and the cost of factory output was measured in terms of its outlays on labour and materials. Factories were expected to reduce their costs each year, and were paid for their output accordingly. But wage-rates, prices and the costs of raw materials were centrally fixed; and new machinery was allocated centrally through the plan. For industrial wholesale prices there was no price mechanism or flexible price-fixing machinery responsive to supply and demand;[1] the profit-motive was largely replaced by the motive of fulfilling the plan.

Prices in industry were rigidly fixed, and production programmes were more important than prices—thus when goods were in short supply their prices did not rise; instead, supplies became scarce. A complicated system for the direct physical allocation of materials had therefore to be erected side by side with the production planning edifice.

The factories were not merely passive recipients of the plans. To keep the system working, the gaps and faults in the central plans were covered by an elaborate network of legal, semi-legal and illegal devices to secure materials in short supply. The Russian equivalent of capitalism's commercial traveller is the *tolkach*, the "pusher": the commercial traveller tries to sell what people don't want to buy; the *tolkach* tries to buy materials and equipment in short supply that other factories don't want to sell. What really happened in the industrial planning system lay somewhere between the paper plans of the planners and the apparent muddle of industrial practices at the factory end. As planning gets more experienced, the paper plans become more and more realistic.

This complicated planning pattern is the background to the position of the industrial Ministries about which Khrushchov commented in a recent *Times* interview: "It was really incredible! A Minister used to be higher than God." Because of the difficulty of getting supplies, each industry or sub-industry tried to keep all the stages of the industrial process with which it was concerned under its own control. Thus every Ministry had its own brickyards and quarries, and factories tended to make their own hand-tools rather than depend on outside supplies.

Post-war Problems

During the first few years after the war, the industrial planning system was fully occupied with the job of assisting recovery from the immense havoc wrought by the German invasion: the planning techniques used were little changed from those of pre-war. By the end of the fourth five-year plan (1946-50) we are dealing with an economy at a substantially different level from that of the late twenties. Three factors come together: the greater maturity and education of the industrial labour-force; the beginning (though only the beginning) of the "drying up" of the supply of unskilled labour from the countryside; and the coming to an end of the technical advantages which Russia had from being able to borrow much of its technology from Western Europe. Simultaneously there is the problem of the standard of living in the towns and the relative backwardness of agriculture; how far can the strain and sacrifice of the pre-war period be continued?

What seemed to be needed by about 1951 was a modification of the system to take proper account of the new economic and social forces of industrialised Russia; to relieve the strain and give greater material rewards for the efforts of 25 years; to improve the position of agriculture. But just because this involves some diversion of resources from heavy industry, ways of maintaining the growth of labour productivity and efficiency must be found. But here there is another snag. It didn't matter much that only crude standards of efficiency were used when you were partly concerned with putting in certain key plants on Western models—but now innovation is of greater importance from top to bottom in

[1] I know of no confirmation in Soviet economic literature of the puzzling statement in the January 1958 *Marxism Today*, p. 32: "If you wanted more of a thing produced you raised its selling price; if you wanted some fuel or raw material economised on you raised its price to the buyers of it." This could only have been done if there were a variable tax on producer goods similar to the turnover tax on consumer goods. No such tax existed; and planners often *cut* selling prices of products in order to encourage their consumption, without any compensating payment to the producer. They were able to do so because the production plan mattered more to the producer than his profits.

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industry. You can't control a developed industry from the centre by a fairly crude production drive, and you can't plan everything in detail from the centre any more, even if you think it desirable to do so. If the economy is to continue to expand, decentralisation must be the watchword—the power of economic decision-making must be dispersed much more widely.

In the early post-war years, even after recovery from war devastation was largely completed, there was no sign of necessary changes. Heavy industry continued to receive most attention; agriculture in particular was largely neglected. Centralisation increased in both agricultural and industrial planning, so that the interplay I have described between "plan" and "muddle" began to be held up, and this limited efficiency. And all this happened in a context in which the orthodoxies and bossing about of the "Stalin period", which had a positive economic effect in the 1930s, became more rigid and began to affect economic progress. Technical and scientific borrowings from the West were frowned upon in certain important fields. The range of economic problems on which serious discussion could take place became more restricted, and economists were almost completely deprived of the statistics without which serious economic discussion could not take place. And so on. One result, curiously enough, was that in spite of the high degree of centralisation, long-term planning deteriorated: the Great Construction Schemes of Communism of Stalin's last years dealt with the fringes of the economy, but disguised the fact that long-term plans in the basic industries were absent or inadequate.

The Thaw and Planning up to 1956

In the thaw of the past few years, changes have begun. In the allocation of the national income, an important shift had already been made two or three years before Stalin's death. From about 1951 onwards, the industrial output of consumer goods has risen almost as rapidly as that of producer goods. Since Stalin's death, there has been a protracted controversy about this question, partly in public and partly behind the scenes. It is clear that a relatively small investment in the consumer-goods sector would be likely to produce a substantial change in the quality and amount of output, and in these circumstances the pressure is likely to continue.

In Stalin's day there was much less willingness to undertake substantial new investments in agriculture, and the increase which took place here immediately after his death was most marked. Agriculture is no longer the neglected parent of Soviet industrialisation.

This shift in investment streams has been accompanied by some change in the allocation of consumer goods between the various classes of the population. Agricultural prices have been relatively increased, so that the peasants' share in the sales of consumer goods has risen; and the earnings of underprivileged sections of the urban population (old people and unskilled employees) have been quite substantially increased. But the pressure for more equality is certain to continue.

Further, planning has become very much more of a public act since Stalin's death. Economists now get hold of many more statistics, and policy-makers are more free to put forward and discuss long-term plans. This has already had a practical outcome in such special schemes as the 15-year Railway Development Plan and in the 15-year targets for overtaking the present economic level of the United States announced by Khrushchov last November.

The most intractable problem has proved to be that of decentralisation. Between 1954 and 1956, important first steps were taken. Many factories were transferred from central control to the local and republican authorities; the number of details fixed in the central plan was cut by about two-thirds, and the responsibility for these decisions was transferred to the factories and the Ministries in charge of them. Factories were given increased powers over investment: short-term bank loans have enabled some £150 millions investment (out of a total of some £8,000 millions) to be carried out by factories without needing central planning approval last year.

But these measures were adopted in a situation in which the only serious administrative force in industry apart from the central government was the industrial "empires" of the Ministries: the economic powers of local government, local planning committee and trade union were very limited in the industrialisation period. The powers transferred from the central government therefore tended in practice to pass to the central Ministries. Moreover, when factories got greater control over their output, they naturally tended to produce what was most easily manufactured or most profitable: part of the money profit is placed at the disposal of the factory in a special fund. But as there had been no attempt to reform the price structure, what was most profitable was often not what was most needed. In consequence, the Ministries seem to have tended to tighten up their control over factory output once again. The general result seems to have been a strengthening of the Ministerial empires.

The 1957 Reform—Policies

Thus the attempt to decentralise while retaining the existing administrative structure partly failed:

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this is the background to the 1957 reform. Many people in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, including the present writer, expected that the next step would be to increase the economic powers of factory management.[1] But in the absence of a new price structure this was impossible: the reader will be aware from the summary of the views of Soviet economists on industrial prices published in the January 1958 *Marxism Today* that discussion on this subject is at a fairly primitive stage. In any case, the extension of the powers of factory managements in respect of the higher authorities seems to me to form only one segment of the devolution of political and economic power which is required.

The 1957 reform makes use of the fairly strong regional element which was present in early (pre-1930) Soviet planning. It also leans heavily on the regional element already present in Soviet industrial structure—the regional committees of the party, which had a fairly important influence on industrial policy and planning even when the centralised Ministerial structure was at its strongest. What the reform does is to divide the country into 104 economic regions, varying considerably in size and population, but with an average population of two millions: these regions generally correspond to the administrative regions of Soviet local government and party organisation. In each region, a Council of National Economy is responsible for the administration of *all* (or almost all) industry in the region which was previously controlled by central or republican Ministries. It is as if a semi-government committee attached to Essex County Council were responsible for all major industry in Essex, including Ford's, Ekco's and the Tilbury oil refineries. The 30-odd industrial Ministries have been abolished. Central production and investment plans are as before drawn up in Moscow by the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) and the Soviet government, but they now co-ordinate and consult with the economic regions and the republican governments instead of the industrial Ministries.

Some of the old inefficiencies have been easily got rid of as a result of this bold move. Gorky region has provided some of the best examples of this. Here as long ago as 1946 a young economist wrote a thesis examining the wastage which resulted in Gorky from the Ministerial system: his work received little attention in the prevailing atmosphere of the time, but in the intervening years he has made a thorough study of engineering, and the new Council of National Economy has already made use of his proposals on co-operation between the region's metallurgical and motor-car works. Production of tools and stampings for the region has been concentrated in a few specialised workshops in large factories, and the numerous small building-materials factories previously attached to the Ministries have been centralised under a building-materials trust for the region. On the administrative side, 80 offices dealing with supply and sales problems have been rationalised into 14, and the staff cut from 2,800 to 900 persons. Many other efficiency measures of this kind have been taken up and down the country, and the total result must be a very considerable saving in costs.

—Problems

The Gorky region is of course one of the stronger regions industrially; it produces about 3 per cent of the U.S.S.R.'s industrial production. Some of the weaker regions are much less capable of undertaking rationalisation measures of this kind, and hardly seem large enough for economic efficiency. Apparently the country was divided into as many as 104 regions largely in conformity with the existing administrative pattern: a strong case has been made, particularly in the 70 regions of the Russian Republic, for grouping them into a few larger units of which the regions would be sub-units; these larger units might possibly conform with the six regions used in the Russian Republic by Gosplan for planning purposes. In the Ukraine, which forms a fairly compact industrial area of 11 regions, it is apparently proving possible to co-ordinate the production of standard tools, castings and stampings at republican level.

But even the Gorky region, which is one of the best placed, has come up against major difficulties. There are two main causes of dissatisfaction reported in the Soviet press. The first is the relationship between the economic region and the central authority. It appears that no clear-cut arrangements were made for central planning and control in the new system. What has happened is that the Gosplans for the U.S.S.R. as a whole and the larger republics have taken over the management of the supply and sales organisations previously attached to each Ministry; these operate as before. Gosplan has also tended to take over the planning offices of the Ministries: the Gosplans therefore have under them in miniature the old machinery of the Ministries; and the Gorky region complains that the amount of form-filling that is needed has not been reduced.

[1] A separate problem or aspect of Soviet industry, which will not be pursued here, is the changing relationship between factory management and the worker on the shop floor; and the varying part played by the latter in past, present and future Soviet planning.

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In the Russian Republic in 1958 central plans have been arranged much in the old way: targets were increased on the basis of 1957 results, and supplies for the first three months of 1958 were allocated to each region on the crude basis of 23 per cent of last year's quota for each material. With some materials, particularly those which are not under close Gosplan control, the *tolkachi* have increased their operations since the reform: at a Voroshilovsk plant, 200 *tolkachi* from other factories, not allowed in through the reception room, made their way in through the service entrance and bought up rolled metal intended for another works but unacceptable to it because of its specifications. Another problem is that in some respects, as is often the case in Russian reforms, things seem to have gone too far: as one example, the repair trust of the Ministry of Machine Tools, previously responsible for a very useful machinery exchange and repair service over a wide area, has been deprived of both its factories—these have been transferred to the regions, which are not large enough to control them on their own.

The second main complaint comes from the factories themselves. The powers of factory managements must be extended, it is argued, and those of higher administrators reduced: "the whole course of development in recent years leads to this conclusion," says one writer. Here the regions are evidently attempting some useful experimentation, but it is not clear how much will be possible within the present structure.

—And Prospects

What is so far known (February 1958) about the results of the reform would therefore seem to point to these conclusions.

First, the first six months of the reform show a satisfactory rise in output and some important inefficiencies have been eliminated.

Secondly, some modifications in the present structure of the reform are possible which may help considerably in obviating difficulties. The number of regions could be reduced, or they could be grouped. Some carefully chosen powers could be restored to the centre: for some matters, one writer argues, "the ship must be bigger, and its course must be wider—the boundaries of one region are not enough". There is an insistent and sensible demand for the establishment of a unified and properly co-ordinated central body for the control of state supplies. Rethinking about central planning powers has already led to some important improvements, such as the decision to "overlap" each annual and five-year plan with the succeeding one, so that the planning process is more continuous.

A third set of problems, which runs all through present discussions, is much less simple to handle. This concerns prices. As I mentioned earlier, the present reform was a response to a situation in which the decentralisation measures of 1954-56 had proved partly unsatisfactory in the absence of a satisfactory price system. A writer in a recent number of *Kommunist* has summed it up in the enquiry: what arrangements can be made so that a factory will prefer to produce 100,000 good quality shoes rather than 120,000 poor quality shoes? If there is to be more initiative at factory level, and economic power is to be more widely spread, profound changes in the price system will be needed. Consistent and efficient pricing is also necessary to the planners themselves. The present planning system has made possible a rapid rate of economic growth by co-ordinated and farsighted decisions on major questions. But on the details, planners' decisions are at present often poorly based because of the inadequate price system: thus there are many cases reported of poor seams being worked at very high cost, investments being made wastefully, and silk goods being produced when woollen ones are needed.

Set in a wider context, the changes in industrial planning form part of a wider devolution of powers which is being attempted. The developments of the past few years have led to important modifications in the previous political and economic structure in response to the contradictions in Soviet society which have become manifest in the post-war period. Further major changes in local government, trade union and party structure will follow. The problem which faces the Soviet government and people is to produce a new and appropriate structure which will retain as much as possible of the social and economic *élan* which has carried the Soviet Union to its present position, and will provide full scope for the new talents which have been developed since 1928. What is the way forward for the Soviet Union in the age of automation and atomic power, now the first stage of industrialisation is over? The changes in industrial planning are a practical attempt to provide a small part of the answer.

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The Draft Programme of the Austrian Socialist Party

Franz Marek

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A DRAFT programme was put before the Congress of the Austrian Socialist Party (Sozialistische Partei Oesterreichs—S.P.O.) held at Salzburg in November 1957—a programme which had been elaborated by a small commission led by Benedikt Kautsky, the son of Karl Kautsky. The draft was not discussed at the Salzburg Congress. Discussion has been taking place in the various organisations of the Party since the beginning of this year, and is due to be completed by May 1958, when a Special Congress is to be held and a final programme adopted.

The ideological outlook of the Austrian Socialist Party (A.S.P.) has a significance that goes beyond the limits of a small country. This Party is one of the strongest sections of the Socialist International, and its ideological influence within the International is traditional. During the years between the two world wars, Otto Bauer, the leader of Austrian social-democracy, was, without any doubt, one of the main leaders of the Socialist International, of which the Secretary was another Austrian, Friedrich Adler. After the second world war it was yet another Austrian who was, until quite recently, Secretary of the Socialist International; and it is not by accident that its last Congress, in July 1957, was held in Vienna.

The ideas contained in the new programme of the A.S.P. can well be expected to find an echo in the other sections of the Socialist International. Benedikt Kautsky himself noted with pride the ideological importance of his Party, when, presenting the draft programme, he emphasised with satisfaction that the A.S.P. was the first Socialist Party to elaborate a programme since the second world war.

The last programme of Austrian Social-Democracy dates from the year 1926. It played a rather important part in the history of the Austrian working-class movement and is generally known as the "*Linzer Programm*" (Linz Programme), as it was adopted at Linz, capital of the province of Upper Austria.

This programme was, quite rightly, considered as a classic expression of the trend known as Austro-Marxism, i.e. of that particular trend adopted by social democracy in Austria which on the one hand loudly proclaimed its faith in Marx and Marxism, whilst on the other it justified a policy which led to constant retreat before reaction.

Thus when we Communists spoke at that time and after of the Linz Programme we emphasised in our considerations and criticisms the typical weaknesses of Austro-Marxism: the distortion of the materialist conception of history transforming it into a fatalism which justified every defeat as inevitable; indecision and vagueness on every question related to working-class power; a negative attitude to winning the peasants as allies—only to quote the more important points.

But as a result of developments since the second world war and of the conceptions of the present principal politicians of the A.S.P., it becomes necessary to pay more attention to the other points of the Linz Programme: the recognition of the fundamental ideas of Marxism, for example: the class struggle; the clear admission that capitalism is the source of the danger of war. Although in a vague and false manner, none the less the Linz Programme recognised the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat after the victory of the working class.

It is precisely for this reason that the leaders of the A.S.P. made haste, immediately after the end of the war, to declare that the Linz Programme had become out of date and that it was necessary to replace it by a new programme. A programme of limited and temporary action was adopted in 1947 as a provisional solution; and in this they still spoke of class war and the winning of socialism as the result of proletarian class struggle. At the time of the Presidential Elections of May 1957, the Socialist candidate, Dr. Scharf, was elected President of the Republic thanks to Communist support; and it was then that the leadership of the A.S.P. thought that the time had

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* From *Cahiers du Communisme*, monthly theoretical and political review of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, April 1958.

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come to elaborate the promised new programme, declaring at the same time that it must be a programme capable of winning electors from the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, and thus obtaining the 51 per cent votes of which the A.S.P. had dreamed for decades.

The Revisionist Campaign

In this connection, and with this aim in view, already before the Congress, various intellectuals and office functionaries who had joined the Party after the war, demanded a total rejection of Marxism, the liberation from "archaic" forms of a class party, complete abandonment of "out-of-date" notions of the proletariat and the class struggle. In the course of this discussion, which preceded the elaboration of the draft programme, open support was given to revisionism and the revisionist critique of Marx. Referring to new phenomena and new elements in society, ideas were put forward which were, in fact, the ideas that Bernstein had already put forward 60 years before, when he, also, proclaimed that there were new phenomena and new elements in society.

The slogan "Marx is out of date" is obviously just as old as the criticism of Marx, in fact as old as Marxism itself, and it is put forward along with notions and conceptions which are actually pre-Marxist.

The draft programme that has been put forward shows all the marks of this campaign. It is a contradictory document which in numerous passages "corrects" mistakes which it makes elsewhere; certain sections of it appear as a simple résumé of a discussion with mutually contradictory theses. To the draft programme, which consists of two parts—a fundamental part and a résumé of immediate political demands—an additional section has been added which in numerous points contradicts the fundamental section. It is not without reason that the central organ of the main government party in Austria, the Popular Catholic Party, wrote concerning the draft, that an effort had been made "to break free from Marxism without offending the Marxist section of the Party's supporters". But the essence of the programme, the main direction of its principles, is clear: renunciation of Marxism, of the Marxist class point of view, virulent anti-Communism.

The draft programme begins by a series of effusions on the ideas of "Socialism" and "Democracy", copied almost textually from Bernstein's book, which appeared in 1899, *The Conditions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*.

According to the draft programme, socialism is nothing else than the "flowering of personality". Nothing else is said of this idea except that it represents "the completion of democracy".

Democracy soars above classes; there is no such thing as bourgeois democracy or socialist democracy; there is only democracy in itself (just as in Bernstein's book), which is a state of society which already contains socialism within itself. Equally, there is an attempt made in the draft programme to provide an historic justification of these conceptions. Since Marx, everything is said to have changed fundamentally: there are no more incompatible class contradictions; on the basis of democracy, modern ideological trends like conservatism, liberalism and socialism are coming nearer and nearer to each other. A part of the conservatives are said to have fallen for a period into the error of fascism but they were quickly cured by fascism itself. The socialist working-class movement is said to have succeeded in the work of re-education, with, as a result, conservatives becoming more liberal, and the liberals better understanding the necessity of government intervention. The three "communities of modern thought" thus merge into one fundamental idea of "the economy of a planned community". Sweet and tender as a breeze in spring is this world of "democracy" where there is no more class struggle, no more reaction, no more proletariat—all these ideas are absent from the draft programme. And as the point of departure is that democracy has no class character, but is a sort of democracy in itself, there is not within the draft programme the slightest reflection of all those problems of socialist democracy which in recent years have so much preoccupied the international working-class movement: How is the leading role of the working people expressed in the State and administration? How can you secure the steadily increasing participation of workers in the management of enterprises and control of the State apparatus? What role must the trade unions play in the building of socialism?

All these problems are ignored by the draft programme, just as it ignores (as we have said) socialism itself. The draft speaks, in the section relating to immediate demands, of the necessity of an "economic community" which must embrace important enterprises like the private capitalist enterprises which will continue to exist. But you can look in vain for a definition of the rights of the working people in this "economic community", and, above all, of their democratic rights with regard to the management of this economy. You will find in the course of this hopeless search that nowhere is the demand made that these enterprises should become national property. This is the measure of the extent to

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which "the approximation of modern ideological currents" has apparently been achieved.

In view of the fact that in the draft programme the class outlook is outdated, both democracy and dictatorship soar above classes; the draft programme operates rather according to the four points of the compass.

East and West

Untroubled by the "unfavourable geographic" situation of many South American countries or of that of Spain and Portugal or Turkey, liberty, democracy, the "approximation" of ideological currents are proclaimed as the West. The East, by contrast, are "the reactionary dictatorships" where "an unrestricted despotism has reigned for thousands of years".

The East is, for the draft programme, an ideological entity which embraces, without distinction, the U.S.S.R., the countries of the People's Democracies, along with the liberated colonial peoples. All these are considered as reactionary countries, of which the political and economic revolutions are equally to be condemned, the economy is based uniquely on war and armaments, the standard of life is ceaselessly falling, and democracy still has to be achieved since its decisive representatives, the individual capitalists and the workers, do not exist or are only beginning to exist.

These countries are said to threaten peace by their thirst for power. That is why "democratic socialism" regards them as its "mortal enemy". Moreover, "although in the West the contradictions between capital and socialism have evolved in a manner which makes possible a gradual shading off within the framework of the rules of the democratic game, and without it being necessary to have recourse to force", in the East, for these "reactionary dictatorships", the task still remains of creating the conditions necessary for democracy through "democratic socialism". The draft programme even declares that "revolutions, civil wars and even perhaps external wars will accompany this process".

The draft programme here goes much further than the fundamental declaration of the Socialist International of 1951. Its rabid anti-Communism goes along with its reactionary conception of the decay of the colonial system. According to the draft, with the Eastern world there can be "no possible agreement or conciliation". The East is "the irreconcilable enemy of democratic socialism in whose name all the revolutions of the Communist area—from Cronstadt to Budapest—have been carried through".

The authors of the new programme would certainly cross themselves three times if one put under their eyes the book which was written by Otto Bauer shortly before his death and in which he wrote that "the road towards a perfect democracy, which will neither be dominated by capital, nor threatened by class struggle, is only accessible through the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to say through the power of the proletariat which must be strong and durable enough, whatever form it assumes, to carry through the transformation of capitalist society into socialist society" (Otto Bauer, *Between Two World Wars*, p. 322).

They would cross themselves ten times if they came to read the statement, so often repeated, that "the most important factor of post-war history . . . is the victorious development of socialism in the Soviet Union" (op. cit., p. 356).

Today in the A.S.P., Otto Bauer is treated worse than a mangy dog, but even the first President of the Austrian Republic after the second world war, Karl Renner, whom the leaders of the A.S.P. still celebrate as their ideological guide, and who was certainly no friend of the Communists, declared in his last book, which was published after his death, that the Communists "are the left wing of the working-class movement"; and he added that, for him, the discussion with the Communists was "a quarrel within the fortress". For the authors of the draft programme it is quite clear that Renner himself is outdated, since at times he acted according to a Marxist class point of view, and he was convinced that, without the victory of the Soviet Union over Hitler fascism, there would be no A.S.P. and no draft programme of the A.S.P.

Starting from Bernstein's ideas, the draft programme wipes out all class contours, and comes to proclaim the necessity of war and counter-revolution against the socialist countries and the liberated colonial peoples. It starts by the rejection of Marxism, declaring that Marxism is outdated, and ends with the slogan of violence against the country where triumphed the working class led by Marxists, and where victory came to those whose struggle confirmed in so striking a way the fundamental ideas of Marxism developed by Lenin.

Changes in Capitalism?

The authors of the draft project justify the "outdating" of Marxism by referring to changes that have taken place in capitalism and to two errors of Marxism. Marx and Engels, they say, predicted a "division of society into proletariat and bourgeoisie", but instead of that there has developed "a multitude of classes and groups" and "a system of complex interests which combine in different ways". Moreover, the idea that

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through industrialisation wage workers would become the majority of the population has been shown to be a false one. It would still be false if employees were added to the wage workers, though this cannot be done, given their differences in "mentality".

It is, in fact, a quite absurd simplification of Marxism to try to pretend that its founders stated that there would be only two classes under capitalism. Already Marx and Engels themselves, with regard to the capitalism of their day, described the different groups and strata outside these two main classes and those within the proletariat and bourgeoisie. As for the future development of capitalism, Engels bequeathed numerous counsels on the manner by which the working class after coming to power can convince the peasants of the advantages of co-operative production and the superiority of socialism. This advice would be totally deprived of sense if Engels had been of the opinion that the development of capitalism would bring about the disappearance of the peasantry.

What Marx and Engels really foresaw and predicted was the polarisation of capitalist society into two decisive classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; and, moreover, the progressive proletarianisation of sections of the petty bourgeoisie. This conception is not even contested in the draft programme, though it specifies that this process is limited to periods of crisis. However, in years of prosperity, industrialisation attracts to the factories sons of peasants and small exploiters, and in the west of Austria there are numerous factories where a large majority of workers have fathers who were, themselves, not workers. The following figures from the country, whose industry is the most developed in the world, show, without possibility of mistake, the direction of development:

In 1870, 40.4 per cent of all the working people of the United States were not wage workers (working on their own behalf); in 1910 these were only 27.1 per cent; in 1950, 14.4 per cent; and in 1954, 13.3 per cent. The actual development, therefore, has confirmed the prognostication of Marx, and if there is error, it should not be looked for on his side.

The Role of Employees

It is just the same with regard to the refutation of the theory that wage workers will, as a result of industrialisation, come to form the majority in capitalist society. The authors of the draft programme of the A.S.P. drew their theories from the book *Marx and the Present* by Fritz Sternberg, a German Socialist, who is, at present, one of Marx's critics who is in favour in the U.S.A. It is true that Sternberg expressed himself with much more prudence and only claimed that the workers "often" did not form the majority of the population. But the draft programme extends this theory and takes up the thesis of Sternberg that employees are not workers. As for the statement that the workers and employees taken together never form the majority, this is derived only from the authors of the draft programme.

The fact that the number of employees is ceaselessly growing, both absolutely and relatively, is a real problem of late-developing capitalism. The fact that employees exist, that they fulfil a specific function, and that they possess a particular mentality, was well known by Marx and Engels. Moreover, in *Capital* Marx analysed the position of different sections of employees. He proved that the employees, in production and transport—just like the workers in production—created value and surplus value, and that commercial employees helped commercial capital to realise part of its surplus value.

But, in *Capital*, Marx emphasised specifically that, just as all employees, those who work in commerce are "wage earners just like the others" because their selling-power is always a source of profit.

Just as the bourgeoisie with its different strata and groups forms one class in relation to the workers, so the workers, despite their different strata and groups, form one class with regard to the bourgeoisie. And facts once again prove that error is not on the side of Marx, but on the side of Marxist critics.

In Austria the workers and employees together represent 62 per cent of all the working people, in France 65 per cent, in Western Germany 71 per cent, in the U.S.A. 82 per cent and in Great Britain 91 per cent. The corresponding figures are 2,071,000 out of a total of 3,347,000; 13,391,000 out of 20,520,000; 15,631,000 out of 22,674,000; 49,294,000 out of 60,037,000; and 20,499,000 out of 22,578,000.

These two striking "proofs" of the "errors" of Marxism are, indeed, old reflections of the critiques of Marx. Sixty years ago Bernstein already used them; doubtless, criticism of Marx consists in copying out what other critics wrote about Marx, without the least critical sense while boasting of a critical spirit.

Benedikt Kautsky—without any reserve the least successful of the works of Karl Kautsky—has made a special argument about the "outdating" of Marx under the inspiration of Bernstein. According to him there existed two Marxes:

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one the ultra-radical, the other the careful thinker; the young Marx still influenced by the Jacobin ideas of the revolution, and the wise sage who had already adopted a calmer position with regard to capitalism.

To get out of the difficulty of the fact that it was the old Marx who, for example, developed his theses of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Benedikt Kautsky pretends that the older Marx was from time to time subject to "moods" which threw him back into the errors of his youth. In fact it was Karl Kautsky, the father, who in his reply to Bernstein already refuted this nonsense about the "good" and the "wicked" Marx (*Bernstein and the Social Democratic Programme*, 1899, p. 7).

Benedikt Kautsky recognises that the one form of Marxism—the "good" or "democratic Marxism"—has a certain importance for the present period, but only for the East.

> "It is certain that in the modern welfare state in which we live, the theories and notions of Marx have little value." But "for our young brother movements in India and Japan Marx is a living reality. If we do not wish to lose our links with these movements, we must not simply push aside the idea of democratic Marxism"—"I would affirm that all fruitful analyses of what is taking place in the East are based on Marx; not only the formation of new classes but also the formation of new revolutionary forces is taking place there according to the ideas which Marx held of such development."

This "democratic Marxism" is thus only of restricted value: for the East where the socialist parties could consider themselves friendly to Marxism, for the countries of working-class power, where—according to the draft programme—the class struggle, civil wars and revolutions are on the agenda. It is only for the "states of public welfare" of the "free West" that Marxism is outdated, for—and this is the affirmation of Benedikt Kautsky—the analysis of all that takes place here must be based on "other theories and rules". Thus this "genial" division of Marx and the value of Marxism corresponds to this differentiated attitude to "West" and "East".

Discussion on the Programme

Without any doubt the draft programme of the A.S.P. provoked a certain uneasiness, repugnance and even resistance amongst many workers and socialist militants.

The "warm" congratulations of the Austrian capitalist press at the throwing overboard of Marxism, and the hopes of foreign capitalist journals who recommended the Socialist Parties of their countries to copy the draft programme of the A.S.P., had an alarming effect. The authors of the draft programme were put on the defensive, and this is clearly shown in the articles and commentaries which they have prepared since the publication of the programme in the central organ of the A.S.P. In trying to justify their draft in the face of the criticisms of militants—who include some leading members of the Party—they arrive at statements and definitions which are in contradiction with the draft, they often put the emphasis of their "fight on two fronts" on the anti-capitalist side, and they make repeated declarations according to which they remain socialists and maintain their original aim. Although the written discussion is only carried in the monthly journal of the A.S.P., which has a small circulation, it none the less reflects the contradiction, rejection and resistance of many socialists who feel clearly that the unreserved renunciation of Marxism is linked to the renunciation of all struggle against reaction. It is already certain that in the final programme its authors will be forced to leave out a number of points that were in the first draft.

Moreover, a phenomenon can be seen which is not a new one in the working-class movement. Lenin already wrote that during the discussion on Bernstein's revisionism, interest in theory was revived and stimulated. In the draft programme the statement is made so often that Marx is "outdated" and that times have changed since Marx, that a steadily increasing number of people are beginning to become interested in what Marx said in reality and in what really has changed since Marx's day. We Communists are trying to provide them with an answer. We are also carrying out a discussion on the draft programme of the A.S.P., for we are not indifferent to the programme of a Party which still includes the majority of Austrian workers. Our most important contribution to this discussion is a programme on *The Austrian Road to Socialism* which we put in February 1958 before the Austrian working class. This constitutes an attempt to apply the fundamental ideas of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions of our country.

This provides, in our opinion, the proof that many things have, indeed, changed since Marx's epoch, but that these changes can only be understood in the spirit of Marx and on the basis of the fundamental discoveries of Marxism.

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Discussion on the Enemies of Trade Unionism

Trade Unionism and Unity

D. D. Evans

ABE MOFFATT'S comment in the May issue of *Marxism Today* is admirable but provokes this afterthought. He terminates his article with the following—"The first battle is beginning to develop around the busmen's claim for increased wages and the whole trade union movement should rally behind the busmen or any other section of the trade union movement that is engaged in the struggle to defend and improve living standards." As I write this comment the London busmen are beginning their struggle for an improvement in their wage standards. They are unfortunately beginning it alone.

This aspect of the struggle is the real problem and the real weakness of the trade union movement today. This is what we have to face and overcome. The strike pay and union finances are small problems compared with this one. The unity of the workers in struggle is much more important than the problem of paying strike pay out of union funds. At the present moment we have millions of workmen prosecuting claims for increases in wages. Each claim is being argued and advanced independently. The decisions of unions to struggle to enforce an improvement in wage and working conditions of any section of workers are taken independently one of the other.

Why are the lessons of Black Friday, 1921, and the long lone agony of the miners in 1926, so hard to learn and so difficult to comprehend by the leadership of the modern trade union movement? Surely the leaders of the miners in particular should know this lesson by heart. I can put forward two answers for further discussion:

1. How is it possible for the ruling class to buy close collaboration from some workers' leaders with knighthoods, mock privileges and in certain circumstances, lucrative jobs? This has been the role of the ruling class for the last century. They are the fruits of an incorrect approach to this problem, whereby unions act independently one of the other in prosecuting the just demands of their members.

The major task of the trade unions of this country is to establish solidarity one with the other, and with the Colonial workers. This is not the charity suggested by the T.U.C. in its solidarity appeals on behalf of Colonial workers, but is a necessity for us as much as for them. Their struggle is ours, and ours is theirs, and neither of us can win alone. Marx and Engels saw this in relation to the Irish and Indian questions a hundred years ago. In Algeria, Cyprus, Ghana, Malaya, Malta, and other Colonial territories, we must see it today.

2. As Abe Moffatt says, the British imperialists face difficulties from West German and American competition. The capitalist class of these countries attempt to make the workers compete with each other. This policy must be resisted. It is not in our interests for each nation to try to outdo the other in producing shoddy goods at cheap prices. In the present crisis, one is struck by the ease with which the employers in this and other countries are able to hoodwink the leadership on this question.

The representatives of the workers in this country meet their respective employers to discuss the problem of producing goods at competitive prices for sale in the world's market. The workers of France, the workers of Germany, the workers of Belgium, America, and all other capitalist countries do likewise, and by this process resurrect the policies that were pursued in the inter-war years when the working class throughout the world competed in starvation contests in an endeavour to produce goods at a competitive price.

The British miner suffered severe wage cuts in 1921, 1926 and 1931. The German miner, the French miner, and others did likewise. Nevertheless, it did not solve the crisis. At present, the American miners are working 60 per cent of their time. The German and Belgian miners are working short time, and the British miner is facing a crisis which, it is suggested, can only be solved by the closure of uneconomic pits, the intensification of labour at other pits and the production of coal at cheaper rates.

Would it not be easier for the representatives of the miners and the workers in other industries to meet together to discuss this problem and solve it in their own way? Would it not be better for all the workers in this country involved in wage claims at present, to meet to discuss common forms of action to win their demands?

To counter the policy advanced by capitalism, workers must establish a greater unity and a much closer relationship between each other in this country and internationally.

The Miners' International spends a paltry sum of money each year on its work; in fact, the smallest area in the British coalfield commands a greater resource of funds than the Miners' Inter-

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national. What possible work can an organisation representing miners the world over do with the paltry finances available? The miners of South Wales, and in fact, the whole country, have at long last realised the need for unity in the miners' ranks. The South Wales miners have called for better collaboration between the Miners' International and the W.F.T.U.

The British miners have carried a resolution calling for the exploration of the possibility of re-establishing contact between the Soviet and British miners.

Unity at home is extremely important in these days, but unity abroad is equally important. The bans and restrictions that prevail in the working class movement of this country merely aggravate this problem. In the working class movement we have men of all shades of Socialist opinion. They are an integral part of the British trade union movement irrespective of their hue; they are exploited in the same way by their employers. To obtain for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruits of their labours is still our aim.

The *Economist* is exceedingly worried at the militant trends in the British trade union movement. During the war and the immediate post-war years when the British workers adopted a policy of restraint, the *Economist* was loud in its praise; the leaders of the movement were considered to be statesmen and to be behaving in a statesmanlike manner. Now, however, when the industries are producing goods in greater quantities than effective demand can consume, workers are asked to accept a standstill in their wages whilst the cost of living is continually soaring. A leadership that challenges this position is considered to be disruptive and pursuing policies against the economy of this country. It is alleged that the national budget cannot be balanced if such policies are pursued, and that the nation will be unable to pay its way.

However, little does the *Economist* consider as to whether a worker is able to balance his budget. The suggestion (of the *Economist*) that a Royal Commission should examine the work of the trade union movement is no solution to the problems of the day. To endeavour to curb the activities of the trade union movement will not be tolerated these days. Tory Governments and their representatives cannot offer any lessons in democracy to the trade union movement.

Abe Moffatt wrote truly when he said that it was never more necessary for the trade union movement to stand united. That unity must know no national or party limits. It must be world-wide, if the workers are to achieve the full fruits of their labour.

Discussion on Marxism and Morals

On Marxism and Morals

M. Levitas

IT appears from Comrade Burgher's contribution to this discussion that some of us "can easily become obsessed with what look to us like defections from socialist morality in those places where the fight to establish socialism is actually going on". We should look more closely apparently and (possibly if we school ourselves sufficiently) those ideals, which we believed in fact to have been in process of realisation, but which we now know to have been in some measure departed from, will most certainly be, though not immediately, "identifiable".

The allusion here is obvious and it seems to underline the need for the discussion on Marxism and morals opened up by Comrade Lewis. Indeed, it makes very clear the need for a recognition that there are certain principles involving a moral factor which should guide a Marxist in his decisions. That moral factor must be: what aim should he set himself in view of the possibilities inherent in a given situation? The concluding paragraph in Comrade Burgher's contribution implies that there were no departures from socialist morality in the countries where Socialism is being built. And the moral issue here is that, since departure may be taken as a matter of fact, our comrade evidently experiences a need to "explain" my inadequate perception (though I claim to be a Communist and not "an intellectual of the Left") instead of looking facts in the face and working out the lessons. One of these lessons surely is that a socialist morality does not *automatically* grow on to a socialist economy just because a socialist society has a "higher" morality than has a capitalist society; another lesson must be that the thoughts of even the best of our leaders must never be taken as a substitute for our own thinking just because their leadership derives from the fact that they *generally* think more clearly.

Ideals and "Ends"

In any case, it can hardly be true that the ideals of socialists (also engaged in "the fight to establish Socialism") living and working under capitalism are as unrelated to reality as is made out in describing them as "ideals in theory, ideals at the stage of mere Utopian projection". These ideals are in fact the "ends" which crop up in the "means-end" controversy. They are already related to reality in the content of the class

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struggle under capitalism. They are conceived of in the course of a struggle against the values postulated by capitalism. The ideals of common ownership, real democracy, internationalism, an end to anti-Semitism, the abolition of colonialism, and peace, are all concepts springing from the struggle against monopoly capitalism, capitalist power, chauvinism, the ghetto and gas-chamber, imperialism and war. The Marxist claims that these ideals are *realisable*, because the forces exist for their realisation, and to the extent the struggle is waged to realise them.

Thus, on the subject of means-end, Comrade Lewis's formulation is hardly adequate when he writes that Marxists ". . . evaluate means not by absolute standards but by consequences". It would appear, on a Marxist view, that certain alternative patterns of consequences are possible outcomes of a given set of circumstances (or forces). Communists strive to direct those forces to accomplish consequences already inherent in them. The consequences are already *somewhat* shaped by their means, and those means alter in the course of efforts to achieve inherently possible consequences; e.g. a works committee as a means of fighting for a wage increase or against redundancy must undergo change in the course of doing so.

There is, of course, a factor of evaluation. A Communist in a capitalist factory or Communists at the head of a socialist state may conceivably be tempted to condone or "cash in on" anti-Semitic or chauvinist prejudices held by workers in order to become popular as a means of winning or consolidating influence in order to further the victory of Socialism. This I believe would be a particular case of opportunism. Adherence to socialist morality would call for resistance to such temptation, and in the last analysis such opportunism must of course be inimical to the victory of Socialism.

The most important agents in the complex of class struggles nowadays are the political parties: some striving for a classless society; others straining to maintain the supremacy of an exploiting class. The first type of party is the party of the working class, and that party can itself be a poor or an efficient means to its end; and its poverty or efficiency will depend on (among other things) the conviction that its end is possible of achievement without departures from its values, from its morality. The second type of party is that whose ends include the maintenance of a system which can still be construed as efficient when unemployment exists, and whose means for the defence of its system postulates the perpetual danger (at least) of war with nuclear weapons.

In the light of the above argument it can be said that there are two moralities in conflict: (*a*) capitalist morality, (*b*) socialist morality. Comrade Lewis has well answered the demand by certain philosophers that we furnish "a reason, a moral ground other than the fact it is *our* interest we are concerned with" as proof of the superiority of socialist objectives. The class morality, he says, of the working class is far more than a class morality because through its victory society as a whole benefits. This position has support from Engels: ". . . that morality which contains the maximum of durable elements is the one which, in the present, represents the overthrow of the present, represents the future: that is the proletarian (morality)."

All systems of morality have in common that they represent "stages of the same historical development" (Engels); what is peculiar to a higher morality is that its elements—its laws and sanctions—fit the future and its driving force is that class whose interests promote those laws and sanctions.

Socialist Morality

But the laws and sanctions must be *actively* promoted, and a crucial question for socialists at the present time is: how may socialist laws and sanctions be formulated, enacted and made operative? This question has not been and will not be allowed to become a matter of *concern* only for our comrades in the socialist countries. The effectiveness of socialist morality, its mode of operation, its content in practice as well as its formal declaration are before the eyes of the people in capitalist countries in continual contrast with the morality of capitalism. And the salient point in this contrast can only be: to what extent does a socialist country abolish an imposition, satisfy a need, or sustain an ideal concerning the working class under capitalism?

The laws and sanctions must be actively promoted because the emergence of a socialist morality upon a socialist economy, or from a Communist government, is as little (or as much) automatically certain as is a revolution from a revolutionary situation.

For this reason it seems to me that an enquiry into the nature of morality and its grounds is insufficient nowadays, especially as on its own it shirks the content and therefore the contrasts, strengths and weaknesses of the contending systems. It is also insufficient because on its own it does not provide the standards by which the class conscious (and the socially conscious in socialist countries) may estimate their leaders.

Nevertheless the enquiry is necessary, and Comrade Lewis's article gives a firm outline of the nature and sources of morality.

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Duties and Rights

One difficulty exists for me in Comrade Lewis's article: that is, his first ground of obligation. This seems to be, for him, personal—individual. "And here we have . . . the first kind of *obligation*. A man has a duty to himself. . . . A man has the *right* to these things" (the things satisfying his desires). The objection is that "right" can only be considered an obligation in the sense that the individual's group recognises his claim and its duty to grant it. This does not seem to be an obligation from the point of view of the individual. "Right" constitutes a claim by an individual upon his group; "duty" constitutes a claim by his group upon the individual. On this view a man cannot have a "duty to himself": he merely exercises his claims upon his group—an action having special meaning if at some time he has forgone those recognised claims. It seems mistaken to search for a simpler unit than society itself even for a definition of "obligation"—just as mistaken as Comrade Lewis shows it to be to ground morality in anything other than social experience. This difficulty inheres again in the sentence: "This means that the obligation to restrain our natural impulses and forgo our legitimate desires arises from social experience". It is a little difficult to think of impulses which do not contain in them elements of social influence; and desires may only be legitimate by reference to the group.

The Moral Law

John Shaw

I FEEL grateful to Dr. Lewis for what is after all a belated treatment of a most important problem, but I cannot feel that the handling is adequate to the issues involved, nor can I see how Dr. Lewis justifies the sweeping assertion on page 59 (Conclusions), "We thus see that the difficulties and objections concerning Marxist ethics are all answered."

In the first place I should expect the article to draw a clear distinction (which to my mind it nowhere does) between Marxist ethics under capitalism and those of at any rate a socialist society. What we are primarily concerned with in dealing with honest criticism of Marxist ethics (or at least of Communist morality) is our conduct and attitude to moral values in the course of the struggle to achieve working class power. I think it is not unfair to say that many Communists believe or appear to believe that under these conditions any action is morally justifiable which helps in the working class struggle or can be said to further the fight against capitalism. Though Dr. Lewis does not appear to accept this, his words seem to me to involve confusion if not contradiction, if you examine the statement on pages 58 and 59 beginning, "Since they can only fulfil their needs by the overthrow of capitalism . . . and the means to its achievement become moral too." I will refer to this statement later on.

The point is that this criticism of our "amorality" is made by many honest critics and also recently by some Party members, largely influenced by idealistic motives in joining the Party, not because they accept a transcendental standard for ethics. Most, if not all, do not. The substance of their criticism is our attitude towards specific moral values. Since the revelations of the Twentieth Congress it is difficult to deny that we have at least exposed ourselves to such charges, and none the less so because of admissions about "mistakes" and "grave crimes against socialist ethics".

The arguments therefore put forward by Dr. Lewis about the materialist basis of conduct seems to me to begin with the wrong emphasis. It is no answer to this in my opinion that Dr. Lewis adds as though it were an afterthought on page 59 the last two paragraphs beginning "Nevertheless Marxists are well aware" etc. In fact these paragraphs appear to me to be an expression of personal opinion totally unrelated to all the arguments which have gone on previously. They are an added conclusion to account for an obvious omission. They contain at least two highly controversial statements in the nature of an apology for what has happened recently and the quotation from Marx which rounds them off is a brilliant example of a *non sequitur*!

For these values, these general principles—the sacredness of human life, truthfulness, pity—are not merely of enormous importance. They are the very values we are accused of ignoring, of trampling on. Our attitude towards *these* values constitutes the gravamen of the charge against us. It is with these then that we should begin. We should show how they come into the Communist scheme of values, how they form part of the moral standard by which we too can be judged and how we justify, if we do, any "partial" or "temporary" deviation from them. It is not good enough to offer the easy excuse that we renounce them when compelled to do so, because the particular conditions of our bitter struggle do not leave us the alternative.

So too in the argument on "means" and "ends", it is certainly not enough to say, as Dr. Lewis says, in (6) on page 59, "only those means are legitimate which . . . do not lose more than they

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gain". The problem of "means" and "ends" is not a specifically Communist one, but as it *is* a problem for us, we cannot dismiss it quite so easily. I cannot pursue it here, nor can I develop what I feel personally is the biggest moral problem, that of Marxism and truthfulness. Much remains to be done on these questions.

I think there is a good deal of value in the attempted analysis of the origins of moral conduct in society as a guide to our own attitude in dealing with these problems, but when the arguments are summed up on page 58 in (1), (2) and (3), one feels considerable doubt about what is proved. What seems to emerge is a pattern of moral standards which should be true in a socialist society, not what actually happens in bourgeois capitalist society. I cannot see that the reduction of the problem to so-called simpler primitive forms has "proved" what is stated.

This is followed by what I consider an unfortunate digression—a digression, because the summing-up on page 58, "Marxism must begin therefore . . ." does not follow from what has come before. As to the merits of Loeser's attack on Howard Selsam, I am not competent to judge, but I cannot help feeling that the point is that basic human needs are not of themselves the origin of moral law; the *methods* by which those needs are satisfied in society form that basis (Dr. Lewis himself says this on page 58 (1)). In a communist society therefore moral conduct must mean conformity to the laws of social development, but I have added "in a communist society". If I am correct then, Dr. Lewis should have gone on to say at the bottom of page 58, "Marxism must begin therefore with the basing of all obligation *on the methods of satisfying* human needs". If this sounds like a quibble about formulation, well, that comes of introducing a digression without analysing the points involved!

There is no discussion in the article of a number of issues which hinge on matters treated. For example, what of "values", good or bad, which already in bourgeois society have acquired in the course of time significance in themselves, emotive value, possibly? What is our attitude to them? Is "loyalty" for example merely a bourgeois value, or "democracy"? Are these bourgeois abstractions always, under all circumstances? Do we reject them? Do we always insist on reference to a concrete situation? Is "cruelty" not a "bad" in our eyes? Do we reject bourgeois artistic and aesthetic values? Are *all* bourgeois values "absolutes" or "class" morality?

These are not theoretical, academic, doctrinaire questions. Not only do the answers to them in practice win us or lose us valuable allies, but we must not forget the deep bourgeois indoctrination of the British working class who certainly are not worried about the "transcendental" issue!

I hope that some attempt will be made by those interested to take up one or other of the problems suggested, and to develop them either in the way I have hinted at, or in some other way so as to bring them within an integrated scheme of Marxist ethics. No one can say that this has been done in Dr. Lewis's article.

Reply to Discussion on Marxism and Morals

John Lewis

THE discussion which has taken place on "Marxism and the Moral Law" has made two thing clear: firstly, the danger of discussing ethics in a vacuum, in purely abstract terms—one must always be prepared to convert the paper money of abstractions into the hard cash of concrete examples. Nothing is more urgent, more compelling, more capable of arousing enthusiasm on the one hand and indignation on the other than moral issues. All the more reason that we should always know precisely what we mean when we use ethical terms. The second thing that emerges is the difficulty some people find in realising that there is more than one kind of morality, or we had better say *claim* to morality. In fact there may be at least three such claims.

Three Types of Morality

Firstly there is the "morality" which judges what is right solely in terms of the interests of a class; secondly there is the moral ideal of the general good, not the good of one class but of all men, good interpreted in the sense of the satisfaction of human needs; thirdly there are the rules of social life, whatever its particular form, that morality which is the necessary bond of co-operative existence and of mutual dependence.

(*a*) First then let us consider *class morality*, often claimed to be the only morality conceivable. There are two such claims—that of the ruling class, which thus seeks to justify its privileges, and that of the working class defending its rights. Plato advances an ethical justification for the caste society of Athens, and in every age the claims of those who regard themselves as the *élite* are advanced to justify racial and class privilege.

This may be a *claim* to morality, but it must be disallowed, because the mere assertion of sectional interests is not moral. A genuine morality must embrace the general interests of mankind.

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It has also been claimed that morality is what is in the interests of the working class. Franz Loeser attributes this view to me, on what grounds I cannot imagine since my whole argument was that the victory of the working class can only be held to be moral if it serves the interests of society. If it only serves the interests of a class it is no more moral than capitalist morality. In so far then as this sectional interest is asserted to have moral validity we lay ourselves open to the charge so frequently levelled at Marxism, that we believe all moral judgments to be relative to the interests of social groups or that there is no morality higher than class morality. This would be the negation of morals. A working class victory is only moral if it brings into existence a society in which no sectional interest prevails, that is to say a classless society.

(*b*) Secondly we have the view that *the moral is what satisfies the widest range of human needs, in other words the general good*: "a really human morality which transcends class antagonisms" (Engels) and which is completely realised only in a classless society.

I am at a loss to understand why anyone should regard the satisfaction of human needs, which Marx makes "the first premise of all existence", as a merely subjective standard. Of course such needs must be *felt*, must satisfy, must be desired, and these are activities of the human mind, but *what* is valued, sought, fought for is surely entirely objective. What are our needs? Food, clothing, shelter, health, leisure, love, comradeship, travel, art—the list is endless, and these things are objective enough in all conscience.

Granted the ethical validity of our struggle for these ends, it follows that whatever is necessary to secure them becomes morally right too and partakes of the ethical quality of the chosen end. To put it the other way round, many things are *right* because they secure something valuable in itself; a minimum or better a maximum wage is morally right because it is necessary to secure food and clothing and life itself. But life is valuable for its own sake.

(*c*) Thirdly we have the morality which Lenin describes as "the elementary rules of social life that have been known for centuries", and Marx calls "the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals and the intercourse of nations". These rules or principles are independent of the class structure of society, except in so far as capitalism constantly distracts and frustrates them. No society of any kind can continue to exist without a minimum of co-operation, mutual trust, helpfulness, integrity and the rest. It is, of course, only under socialism that they can be fully accepted and operate freely. Nor are they to be written off, as George Burgher does, because "they have a bourgeois look about them". They are just as explicity and seriously enunciated in the classless society of the Soviet Union as in our own. Nor are they to be brushed aside, as Franz Loeser does, because they are merely subjective as contrasted with the objective morality of conformity to the law of social development,

Let us be concrete: do not we all, even Burgher and Loeser, get indignant at some unfairness or injustice inflicted upon us? Do not we feel indignation at cruelty and treachery? Do we not feel a glow of moral approval at some story of heroism, of fidelity to principle, of sacrifice for humanity? Are these ideals of human fellowship really of no significance? Do we not in every society recognise the importance of veracity, loyalty, generosity and pity?

If we turn to Soviet literature and drama, do not the novels and plays constantly deal with issues of this sort, which while they arise within the framework of a socialist society are basically universal? Do not Soviet readers appreciate the human values and standards in Shakespeare and Dickens? Would this be so if all morality were merely class morality and could not be otherwise (Burgher)?

Surely we are concerned here with those "durable elements" of which Engels says "the proletarian morality of the future" contains the maximum, but which are by implication *present in all moralities* even though in a lesser degree.

I do not for a moment deny that there are moralities peculiar to each age and class, that morality can be twisted and interpreted by class interests; I am simply pointing out that it is a mistake to speak *only* of class morality, there are permanent elements of morality too, and Marxist ethics has to do justice to both. Indeed it is precisely the failure to recognise the importance of these permanent elements of morality that is having such a disastrous effect today. It corrupts our Marxism and repels those who cannot be satisfied with indifference to moral standards.

Is Morality mere Romanticism?

George Burgher characterises the reluctance we may feel at taking human life as "a very romantic notion of the Marxist jeopardising his own soul". But is the sacredness of life a negligible scruple? Is it not rather a deeply felt conviction of the whole human race? If when it comes to taking human life we simply do not care, if we regard the high value men place on life as a mere bourgeois prejudice, if we regard our class victory as the only criterion of morality and as

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completely justifying everything, then we shall not only jeopardise our own souls (we shall certainly do that) but our cause as well, for we shall rightly incur the moral condemnation of numbers of upright and conscientious people whose support is indispensable, and we shall also wreck the good we are trying to do by the needless adoption of such means.

Are Moral Rules Absolute?

Let me hasten to point out that it is equally possible, and just as disastrous, to make the opposite mistake and erect these moral principles into absolutes having a sanctity of their own, independent of their social utility. But social utility is the sole ground for morals, though principles which have established themselves because of their utility come to be *felt* as right in themselves. This strong feeling about morals, this commanding voice of conscience, is not lightly to be pushed aside, but it must in extreme circumstances be over-ruled if the loss incurred by keeping the commandments is greater than the loss consequent upon breaking them. This, however, does not lessen their importance or diminish the loss and tragedy involved in violating them.

John Shaw's thoughtful contribution seems to fall into this error—the opposite error to George Burgher's. His position is that socialist ethics must *begin* with the methods adopted to achieve our goal and not with the moral goal of a classless society. Therefore he fails to see the logic of my argument which is that because "the categorical imperative", as Marx called it, in other words *our highest moral duty,* is human emancipation, *therefore* we may, on occasion, have to set aside certain moral rules, as when we are compelled to go to war to defend a socialist state against intervention.

Morality Primarily Concerned with Ends

John Shaw fails to see that morality is primarily concerned with *ends* and only secondarily with *means*. The first step is to determine the goal; this sets us our tasks and lays upon us our duty. The end which thus presents us with the highest moral claim is the satisfaction of human needs, the aim of guaranteeing to men the completely unrestricted development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties, the fulfilment of the unlimited capacity of human nature for knowledge, enjoyment and creation, the struggle to create among men "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx).

This being the end, victory in the class struggle becomes the necessary means and partakes of the same moral quality as the end itself. It too becomes a moral aim. Hence the moral obligation to overthrow class privilege, to restore to men the dignity stripped from them when they became wage slaves, "the overthrow of all those conditions in which man is a degraded, servile, neglected, contemptible being" (Marx).

The Source of the Moral Law

Neither George Burgher nor Franz Loeser accepts the authority of either the satisfaction of human needs or the general rules of social living as the moral imperatives of social life. Loeser imagines that I derive these "simple laws of morals and justice" (Lenin) from Freudian psychology! They arise of course not from Freud, but from human experience, and become authoritative for us by a process of social conditioning. Freud happens to call this process the formation of the super-ego, but social education and training of the young had been going on for a good many tens of thousands of years before Freud!

Loeser strongly objects to the derivation of such moral rules from human experience, feeling that this is pure subjectivism. The only objective source of morals, for him, is the law of social development.

Loeser is surely confusing two quite different meanings of the word "experience". As used by certain philosophers it means our own mental states and they often argue that we can know nothing else. But scientists mean by it the sense experience of the external world which is the whole source of knowledge; the concrete apprehension of facts, of nature itself as it observably exists. But apart from the chemists and physicists we all learn from the panorama of life itself; and among the things we learn are the moral truths that justice, kindness, consideration for the interests of others, willingness to accept our share of the world's work, are indispensable standards of social life. Such values are accepted as the results of adjustment of attitudes which are bound to emerge in the context of social interaction, they are common to all societies and human life cannot go on without them.

To deny their objectivity would seem to indicate an amazing detachment from the realities of everyday life and an excessive preoccupation with the bloodless dance of abstract categories which is quite un-Marxist.

Morals and the Laws of Social Development

Franz Loeser regards the laws of social development as the only valid source of morality.

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> "I define the most basic objective criterion of ethics as all that conforms to the laws of development of society."

Let us consider this view.

1. Suppose there were an iron law of social development. Why should its mere inevitability endue it with any *moral* quality? Mere evolutionary progress is not in itself moral. It has to be judged by its results, by a criterion outside the mere fact of succession. Much evolutionary development is evil—in biology degenerate parasites, beasts of prey, disease, bacteria and viruses. These are not good because they are the product of evolution. Nor is man superior to the tape-worm because he is the product of evolution, but for quite other reasons. If social development issues in a higher moral achievement it is only because we have ourselves taken a hand in making it evolve in the way that we approve. It does not evolve in a morally acceptable direction by itself.

2. There would be no laws of *social* development unless man and society and nature were interacting to secure something they value for its own sake. The laws of development do not go on independently of and outside man, so that man has merely to accept them and submit to them and make them his standard of right. Social development takes the course it does because man has certain values and therefore behaves in his unique revolutionary way to increase his welfare, to eliminate exploitation, to use the forces of nature for his own maximum advantage. There would be no laws of human development if man had no human aims.

3. But granted man and nature, man and the productive system, thus reacting on one another, then laws of development do appear, but they have value only in so far as they are *instrumental* in achieving human aims. Thus the laws of development are judged by the values they attain; values do not themselves derive from laws of development as such.

Some Further Issues of Importance

Half a dozen minor points must just be mentioned very briefly.

1. *Can there be a contradiction between the right and the good*? Indeed there can! It is good to have a high wage and plenty of leisure; it may be right for you to live on a Party salary and have no leisure. It is good to live, but it may be right for you to sacrifice your life.

2. *Right must be defined. "The category of right does not properly speaking belong to the sphere of ethics"* (Franz Loeser). Right, which F. L. says I do not define (but I do so repeatedly), is that which conduces to the maximum social good in which all share. It may and does cut across individual good, but in the long run it derives its authority from the fact that it maximises the distributive enjoyment of good by individuals.

3. *But are there individual rights*? Has a man a *moral* right to secure his own good, as well as a duty often to forgo his own good and always to submit to the restraints and obligations of social life? Yes, he has, and these are the human rights of every man to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", or, as declared in the Soviet Constitution, "the right to rest and leisure, the right to education, the right to work" etc., etc. These are what Stalin calls "the formal rights of citizens".

4. *Further development of morals under socialism.* Certainly, but a permanent core remains, just as a permanent core of Marxist truth remains.

5. *The Soviet Union* has been the scene of cruelties and injustices in the building of socialism; is not this the main ethical question for Marxists today, especially as it concerns the moral principles which should control our own struggle for power?

(*a*) The only way to face this issue is to get down to the basic principles of ethics, mere surface discussion gets nowhere.

(*b*) There is a type of Marxist ethical theory which can give rise to a cruelty, tyranny and untruthfulness which is indefensible. It is the theory which finds *no other* criterion of morality than victory in the class struggle. Marxists may be prevented from such conduct if they give full value to the general laws of morality, which, however, though authoritative are never absolute.

(*c*) To make such moral principles absolute is as immoral, as judged by its social consequences, as to reject them.

(*d*) Whatever has happened in the Soviet Union there has been an immense development of freedom, a great achievement of human welfare, a growth of respect for human personality, and a real emancipation from exploitation and race subordination.

We in the rest of the world have achieved far less and on balance are responsible for more deprivation of human liberty, more contempt for human life, and far less respect for human values than has been the case in Soviet Russia.

Judged by its satisfaction of basic human needs and its promise of even greater fulfilments on the basis of its achievements, communist society has secured the moral leadership of the world.

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Discussion on Philosophy

Philosophers and their Problems

Michael McCreery

MAURICE CORNFORTH'S "Philosophy, Criticism and Progress" in the October 1957 issue of *Marxism Today*, is an article which confuses rather than clarifies the theoretical questions it attempts to deal with.

For example, Cornforth lays many traps for the unwary in the course of his "thinking aloud" about the nature of philosophy, by failing to make clear when he is describing the views of various historical schools of philosophy and when he is giving us the Marxist view on philosophy.

He quotes Engels with approval,

> "That which still survives, independently, of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws—formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history."

—but himself gives upwards of ten definitions of philosophy many of which do not agree with this Marxist position. Such statements as "The subject matter of philosophy should be defined in terms of the kind of questions philosophers try to answer", and "Philosophy questions and criticises the general assumptions underlying the current ideologies of society", may be correct statements of the way in which logical positivists and other schools have defined the scope of philosophy, but they are not within miles of Marxism.

There is, however, a more basic source of confusion. The author purports to be a materialist, but in fact makes considerable concessions to idealism.

For Marxists the distinction between these two points of view in philosophy is vital. Engels wrote,

> "The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being."

And in his *Materialism* Lenin shows that all philosophers can be classified into two fundamentally opposed schools according to how they tackle this question of the nature of reality:

> "The fundamental philosophical trends are materialism and idealism. Materialism regards nature as primary and spirit as secondary; it places being first and thought second. Idealism holds the contrary view. This root-distinction between the 'two great camps' into which the philosophers of the 'various schools' of idealism and materialism are divided Engels takes as the corner-stone."

And Lenin maintains that there can be no compromise between these two schools,

> "either materialism consistent to the end, or the falsehood and confusion of philosophical idealism."

With this in mind let us look at Maurice Cornforth's soliloquy. In the course of this he says,

> "The *measure* of the general progress of society is *the growth of productive technique and knowledge*. . . . In this sense progress is not a matter of opinion or preference but of *ascertainable fact*."

Thus far we can agree; but he continues,

> "While it may be suggested that technique and knowledge provide the *objective basis* and *measure* of progress I do not think that these concepts *exhaust* what we mean when we speak of progress, not merely as something which happens and can be measured but as somethhing *desirable* to strive for. . . . What evidently counts is not technique and knowledge in themselves but the *way of life* they enable people *to enjoy*. And here we are beginning to speak of things which *cannot* be measured, and to introduce *moral* rather than factual considerations." [Italics in this and other quoted passages are *all* Cornforth's.]

In the course of his remarks Cornforth has switched from a materialist to an idealist standpoint. This can be seen most clearly if we look at what he says in the light of Lenin's answer to the question, "What is meant by a definition? It means essentially to bring a given concept within a more comprehensive concept." The most comprehensive concepts possible to man are those of being and thinking, matter and sensation. Beyond these it is not possible to go. It follows that the ultimate, the fully comprehensive definition of any concept must for a materialist be in terms of physical being and matter, for an idealist in terms of thought and sensation. The unbridgeable gulf between these two sets of ultimate concepts reflects irreconcilable views on the nature of reality.

On which side of this fence is Cornforth, in the above passage? Unmistakably the idealist. For in his definition of the concept of progress moral considerations, themselves unmeasurable, take precedence over material, factual considerations. The objective concepts of technique and knowledge in terms of which human progress is at first defined are themselves specifically subordinated to the subjective concept of an enjoyable way of life.

Cornforth gives philosophy the important task of examining these unmeasurable moral considerations in terms of which we are to assess human progress.

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> "Philosophy contributes to progress also by dealing with *the ends which we try to make our material progress serve,* and helps to formulate the *purposes* which by our material progress may be realised."

This completely erroneous view of what philosophy is about (compare it with Engels' classic definition quoted above) is itself further evidence of the idealist nature of the path Cornforth is treading. But his handling of the concrete issue of the class struggle provides, I think, the conclusive proof.

Cornforth points out that when Marx says that history is the history of class struggles this does not mean only that from time to time one class delivers a blow against another, but that

> "*Progress* takes place, marked by such things as increase of productive power, increase of knowledge and development of those ways of life embraced under the terms 'civilisation' and 'culture'."

and that this happens

> "not independently of class struggle but *through* class struggle."

So far so good; but now he wavers,

> "A historian can therefore . . . assess the various historical actions not solely in terms of how they promoted some particular class interest but of how they promoted *general human progress.*"

And a later passage completes his ruin,

> "A philosopher's contribution may *transcend class interests* in the narrow sense. It may not be exhausted by ideas which do no more than serve a particular class at a particular time . . . but may also include ideas which serve and in their development continue to serve the *general* interests of human progress."

This last passage is categorically wrong, and can be shown to be so on Cornforth's own evidence. For if progress only takes place through class struggles then actions and ideas which advance the interests of the class which is the standard bearer of progress at any particular time and place must, of necessity, be identical with actions which promote general human progress.

For a consistent dialectical materialist it is impossible for a situation ever to arise in which the interests of general human progress differ from the interests of the particular class which is carrying the banner of progress at that time. Yet Cornforth does admit this possibility as soon as he allows that there can be ideas which serve general human progress in addition to those ideas which serve a particular class at a particular time. A second yardstick has in fact been introduced whereby actions and ideas may be judged and this clearly allows for the possibility of a clash.

It is not difficult to see that such reasoning can be put forward as a justification for deserting the interests of the working class in a time of crisis.

The way in which Cornforth puts his argument tends to obscure the fact that he is attempting to revise basic Marxist theory; for he never directly contradicts the Marxist position. Rather he attempts to by-pass it. The critical stage at which the leap from materialism to idealism is made is concealed from the unwary by the introduction of an "end", which proves to be idealist, the attainment of which is made possible by strictly materialist "means" (e.g. "the end which we try to make our material progress serve").

When Comrade Cornforth, widely accepted as a leading Marxist theoretician, throws doubt and confusion upon problems that have been resolved for fifty years, it is little wonder that we have yet to smash the crumbling bastions of bourgeois thought in this country, and win the intellectuals to our side.

CORRECTION

In the Discussion contribution by Franz Loeser in our last issue, a correction sent by him was inadvertently omitted. On page 155, right-hand column, the first paragraph should read:

"Morality arises specifically out of the contradictions inherent in the development of every society. Morality is a form of consciousness which indicates to man how to overcome these contradictions, by showing him the correct way of his conduct. Thus a moral rule is more than a value judgment. It contains a directive, which in the last analysis indicates to man how to overcome the contradictions, and how to conform to the laws of development of society. Yet the very moment man is able to conform to his morality, to overcome the contradictions of his development, to conform to the laws of development of society, new contradictions arise, new conditions and laws have already developed. It is precisely because the development of society cannot proceed without contradictions, that there must always be evil, and morality as the rules of conduct trying to overcome evil. Thus as long as society develops, or one could equally say exists, contradictions will exist, which man has to overcome to conform to the laws of development of society. So much for Comrade Lewis's assertion that I reduce all morals to the conformity of laws. It is precisely because man can but incompletely conform to the laws of development of society that morality arises."

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